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## Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

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As usual we shall set a positive motivation for the teachings, such as 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to attain enlightenment so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

### 1.2.1.3. REFUTING OTHER REASONING.

That is sub-divided into two:

1.2.1.3.1. Invalidity of negating emptiness of true existence by reason of direct perception

1.2.1.3.2. Since emptiness exists, its opposite, true existence, is not feasible

As mentioned previously, by developing a synopsis and understanding from the outline of the teachings we can gain deeper understanding of the presentation of the text. So we should try to obtain some understanding from these headings.

The first sub-heading relates to earlier assertions, in which the opponents asserted that things being validated by direct perception provide proof that things exist truly. In negating that assertion, it is explained how just because things are directly perceptible it doesn't mean that things are truly existent.

Again in the second sub-heading, what the opponents assert is that the establishment of emptiness on one hand means that its opposite has to exist. The opposite is inherent existence or true existence. So if you establish emptiness on one side, then that must mean that the opposite, which is true existence, is established as well. This is what is being refuted.

It is good for us to understand the logic of the opponents. Simply dismissing the opponents and not accepting their view, without really thinking much about how they establish their assertions, could result in a lack of deeper insight. We should aim to understand the opponents' views and their reasoning because their reasoning is also quite explicit in the way they have established their assertions and counter arguments.

As our system establishes interdependence, the opponents use that as a reason to try to refute our system. They use the reason of interdependence to say, 'since you establish interdependence, then that means when you establish emptiness it has to be interdependent with its opposite, which is true existence, or inherent existence. They have to be mutually related as being opposites. One can't exist without being an opposite of the other. So they say, according to you this would imply that phenomena exist truly as well.' But of course in our system rather than implying true existence the opposite, which is lack of true existence, is established.

However they use the reasoning of interdependence as we use it in our system. They take our reasons and throw

it back at us saying 'because things are interdependent, then the opposite of emptiness must also exist.' So it is good to realise that if we don't think carefully about their arguments, we might be swayed into thinking that their reasons are valid too.

What is being established in our system is the lack of inherent existence or true existence, and it is being established through logical reasons. We can see throughout the text how logical reasoning is used repeatedly to refute assertions and counter arguments. Through this we should learn how logical reasoning is explained and applied in the teachings; how through the lack of inherent existence, emptiness is established through logical reasoning. In this way we train our mind to gain understanding through logical reasoning.

### **1.2.1.3.1. INVALIDITY OF NEGATING EMPTINESS OF TRUE EXISTENCE BY REASON OF DIRECT PERCEPTION**

As mentioned previously, the opponents negate emptiness using the reason of direct perception. They say that since a vase is directly perceptible, it cannot be empty.

The verse from the root text that presents this is verse 381:

*Where a pot is directly perceptible, 381*  
*The argument of emptiness is meaningless.*  
*Here reasons appearing in textual systems*  
*Are not [acceptable]; elsewhere they are.*

The assertion comes in the first two lines of the verse, as the commentary explains:

The reason proving the pot empty of true existence is meaningless and ineffectual, for wherever there is a directly perceptible pot, that truly existent pot is, according to us, established by direct perception.

The meaning of the second two lines of the verse that serve as the answer is explained in the commentary:

In relation to the thesis of proponents establishing emptiness of true existence through reasoning, reasons appearing in their opponents' textual systems are unacceptable, because they are engaged in rejecting them.

The main point made here is, what is considered a valid reason in other theses is not accepted in our system because those very theses which are used in those other systems are reasons to establish true existence. Whereas in our system the reasons establishing true existence are unacceptable because that is the object of negation, therefore the very reasons establishing true existence, is rejected. So as it reads here *...because they are engaged in rejecting them* meaning rejecting the very reasons, which for them establishes true existence.

In refuting their assertions, this question is then raised:

*Question:* Then are reasons from these textual systems inappropriate in all cases?

*Answer:* Elsewhere there is no incompatibility, since they pertain where both protagonists' tenets are similar.

What is being established here is that the reasoning established in some theses are negated in our own system. The question raised is whether the reasons used are inappropriate at all times, in all cases. So what is being established as an answer is that when there is no

incompatibility, when there is a common basis of accepting the reasoning, then it will be accepted. This can be interpreted in two different ways, either it can mean that reasons which pertain to other tenets which have a similar view to our system, are accepted and appropriate; such as the reasoning in the syllogism, a vase lacks true existence, because of being interdependent. Another way of interpreting that, is the reasons that are accepted in our system, as well as the opponents system, are appropriate.

...there is no incompatibility, since they pertain where both protagonists' tenets are similar.

This is where the reasons as presented in the text are accepted.

### **1.2.1.3.2. SINCE EMPTINESS EXISTS, ITS OPPOSITE, TRUE EXISTENCE, IS NOT FEASIBLE**

The verse that relates to this outline is the following:

*When there is nothing that is not empty, 382  
How can emptiness be so?  
When the one does not exist,  
Why should the antidote exist?*

The assertion in relation to this verse is the following:

*Assertion:* You proponents of emptiness accept the entity of emptiness, and since emptiness is not feasible unless it relies on non-emptiness, things are truly existent.

As mentioned previously, the counter-argument they use basically refers to this fact. According to them 'while you establish emptiness, it has to rely on non-emptiness. It cannot be established unless it relies on non-emptiness.' *Non-emptiness* here refers to true-existence, the opposite of the lack of true existence, is true existence or inherent existence. So this is their counter-argument.

As the commentary presents the answer in relation to the verse:

*Answer:* It follows that the existence of emptiness does not establish its opposite, that there is true existence.

If emptiness were truly existent, truly existent things as its basis would be feasible, but as there is nothing that is not empty of true existence, how can emptiness be truly existent?

When that which is being characterised is presented as being empty of inherent existence or lacking inherent existence, the doubt arises about the characteristics themselves, whether they could have some inherent existence or not. His Holiness also explained in detail in the recent teachings that just as that which is being characterised is empty of inherent existence, likewise the characteristics are also empty of inherent existence. The equations on both sides have to be thoroughly established to remove that doubt, since the doubt does arise.

Then as the commentary further reads:

Its basis cannot possibly be truly existent. Why, when the basis does not have true existence, would the antidote negating it be truly existent?

This also relates to the presentation of the assertions and the refutations made earlier in relation to the base and that which is based upon it, or that which is characterised and the characteristics of that which is being characterised.

The basis or that which is based upon it, or that which is being characterised and the characteristics being equally empty, was presented earlier. Here again the text emphasises those points.

Then the commentary quotes from the *Fundamental Wisdom*:

*If the slightest thing were not empty  
Emptiness would have some existence*

Then as well, the *Two Truths* says:

*Since the object of negation is non-existent,  
The negation clearly does not exist as [its own]  
reality.*

At this point, His Holiness also having quoted from this, raised the question of who the composer of the Two Truths was, whether it was Yeshe Nyingpo or not. His Holiness was checking with the Geshe who said Yeshe Nyingpo was the composer. His Holiness was also referring to Geshe Tashi Tsering and myself. His Holiness also mentioned, in relation to another doubt about the different types of reasoning, establishing the fundamental nature of things and so forth, the different characters and how to explain the nature, karma and so forth. His Holiness was referring to a discussion on this we had last year in New Zealand, and was asking what the conclusion had been. In relation to that discussion we had last year in New Zealand, I was trying to present the conclusion, but His Holiness said, 'okay, lets leave it for now because it might just confuse us more' [laughter]

### **1.2.2. Refuting adherence to theses which fall into extremes**

That is sub-divided into two:

1.2.2.1. Actual refutation

1.2.2.2. Refuting the justification

#### **1.2.2.1. ACTUAL REFUTATION**

This is sub-divided into three:

1.2.2.1.1. Refuting that the non-thesis is a thesis

1.2.2.1.2. Refuting proof that there are truly existent things

1.2.2.1.3. Showing that everything is equally free from extremes

##### **1.2.2.1.1. REFUTING THAT THE NON-THESIS IS A THESIS**

This relates to what is translated here as 'thesis'. The specific Tibetan word 'chog' is more like an in accordance. According to the Tibetan word here 'chog' and 'chog me' relates to 'accordance' and 'discordance'. Basically, it relates to what is translated as 'thesis' and 'non-thesis'. The 'non-thesis' refers to the establishment of lack of inherent existence, lack of true existence, and the 'thesis' here, refers to the bases of negation of true existence. Again it is similar to the earlier counter-argument about when lack of inherent existence is established, the opposite of that which is true existence also has to be established.

*Answer:*

*If there were a thesis, absence of the thesis 383  
Would in entity be a thesis,  
But where there is no thesis  
What can be the counter-thesis?*

The opponents' assertion is:

*Assertion:* Since there is not even the slightest emptiness, it cannot constitute one's thesis. Nevertheless by accepting the absence of a system of one's own as one's system, one is asserting a thesis. Since there is no thesis, which does not depend on a counter-thesis, truly existent things—the counter-thesis—exist.

The answer is:

If we had any thesis of existence by way of a thing's own entity, the absence of a thesis would in entity be a thesis existent by way of its own entity.

While the thesis of non-inherent existence or lack of true existence is established, that does not mean that that thesis itself is truly existent.

The following explanation makes it clear, as it reads in the commentary:

However since we do not have any thesis of existence by way of a thing's own entity, a counter-thesis dependent upon that is also impossible.

The opponent's counter argument is for example, to use an analogy with directional sides of an object; when the eastern directional side of an object is established, the opposite of that side, as not being the eastern directional side is also established. Similarly the opponents use these reasons as a counter-argument, and say *if you were to establish lack of inherent existence or emptiness, then the opposite of that which is true existence, would also have to be established*. However our system clearly states that what is being established lacks any inherent or true existence, so anything counter to that cannot be established in any way as being truly existent either.

However since we do not have any thesis of existence by way of a thing's own entity...

So there is no thesis which establishes a thing existing by way of its own entity, existing from its own side, so a counter-thesis dependent upon something which exists from its own side, is impossible. That's what is basically being established.

Continuing on:

Moreover all theses concerning truly existent things have already been refuted above.

Clearly all the previous verses negating true existence have been established.

Furthermore it clarifies the remaining part of the explanation in the commentary:

Thus if the absence of a thesis does not exist by way of its own entity, what truly existent thing could constitute the counter-thesis?

This being a rhetorical question, it means that it couldn't.

Neither thesis nor counter-thesis have even an atom of true existence. By this we refute truly existent emptiness as our system, which should not, however, be interpreted as showing that we have no system.

What is being clearly established here is that when the thesis of lack of inherent existence is established, it doesn't mean that nothing exists. It doesn't mean that we are establishing a thesis, which indicates that nothing exists, that there is nothing. In other words emptiness

does not imply that there is no thesis, where nothing is being established

### **1.2.2.1.2. REFUTING PROOF THAT THERE ARE TRULY EXISTENT THINGS**

That is sub-divided into three:

1.2.2.1.2.1. It is not feasible that there is true existence on the grounds that specific functional things are truly existent

1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting the four extremes by reasoning

1.2.2.1.2.3. Not even the smallest particle of true existence can be observed

#### **1.2.2.1.2.1. It is not feasible that there is true existence on the grounds that specific functional things are truly existent**

*Answer:*

***How can fire be hot,***

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***When things do not exist?***

***This was refuted above: it was said***

***That even hot fire does not exist.***

The opponents use a counter-argument giving examples of what we conventionally call 'the nature' of something. Such as hot being the nature of fire; sweetness being the nature of molasses. These are explained as being in the nature of an entity. Using that as an example the opponents say 'since hot is the nature of fire, then that characteristic or nature should be truly existent'. Similarly sweetness, being the nature of molasses, must be truly existent.

Thus their assertion is the following:

*Assertion:* There are truly existent things, because specific things like fire and so forth [truly] exist.

The word *truly* is missed out as according to the Tibetan text.

Both us, and the opponents, would agree that hot is the nature of fire, as sweetness is the nature molasses. However that does not indicate that the entity of hot exists from its own side or is inherently existent in fire. Even though we would say that hot is the nature of the fire.

The meaning of the verse is explained in the commentary:

How can fire be hot by way of its own entity? It cannot, for there are no truly existent things. Above it was said that even hot fire does not exist inherently. As it says in the stanza 341

The nature of fire being hot and that being dependent on fuel was clearly explained in the earlier verse. So what is being reiterated here is that fire is that which burns, and because fire has the characteristic of burning, it also has the nature of being hot. However having the nature of being hot does not come about independent of anything else, because fire depends on fuel. Without fuel there can't be fire. So just as fire and fuel are interdependent, the nature of fire being hot is also dependent on fuel, as it does not arise independently.

The nature of fire being hot is not such that heat exists independently with fire. Fire itself would then exist independently in the nature of being hot. It does not exist this way as it depends on fuel to burn. It is in combination with fuel that the fire is in the nature of being hot and burning. Without fuel there can't be fire.

