

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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Based on the motivation we generated during the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

It would be good for us to incorporate this meditation into our daily practice, as we just attempted in that short session. We need to particularly check that our mental focus is stabilised: making an effort to stabilise a mind which is not yet stable and further stabilising it once it is settled.

Many obvious faults arise because of an unstable mind. When our mind is distracted externally, that brings both physical and psychological problems. If we could maintain our focus inwardly and allow the mind to abide peacefully, then that that would benefit us in whatever we do.

Once we acquire some control over our mind and subdue it to certain degree, we will have begun to establish the foundation for genuine peace in our mind.

Of course, the students here are already aware of these points. Nevertheless, we need to attend to them, because, if we don't use the instructions presented here to subdue our mind, then there will be nothing else that can help subdue it. We all know from our own experience that the unsubdued and crazed mind brings a lot of unwanted difficulties and problems in one's life.

2.3.2.3. STATING THE REASONS THAT ESTABLISH THE LACK OF TRUE EXISTENCE

2.3.2.3.1. The vajra sliver reason (cont.)

2.3.2.3.1.3. Refuting generation from a permanent principal

The **Samkhyas** assert what is called the *principal*, which is the primal cause of all subsequent manifestations or expressions.

This section is subdivided into two:

2.3.2.3.1.3.1. Stating the position

2.3.2.3.1.3.2. Repudiating it

First, we need to understand what the Samkhyas' position is, then we can repudiate it.

2.3.2.3.1.3.1. Stating the position

126cd. *That a permanent principal is the cause
Of migrators is asserted by the Samkhya.*

127. *The equilibrium of the qualities of
Courage, particle, and darkness
Is strongly asserted as principal
And their imbalances are the migrators.*

The commentary explains:

Enumerators (or *Samkhyas*): From nature comes the great, from which in turn pride arises. Pride leads to the collection of sixteen, which are expressions (manifestations) while the person is neither nature nor expression.

The Enumerators posit that out of the twenty-five classes of objects of knowledge, the principal has the five characteristics of being permanent, unitary and so forth and is the cause for the various expressions and the migrators. Courage, particle and darkness are other words or other terms for happiness, suffering and equanimity. When these three characteristics are in equilibrium, they are strongly asserted as the principal, and when they are in disharmony, they are the migrators i.e. the expressions.

The **Enumerators' (Samkhyas')** position is that *from nature* or the principal, the great one arises, followed by pride. Then *pride leads to the collection of the sixteen, which are expressions while the person is neither nature nor expression*. The Samkhyas are asserting that the principal or nature is a primary source of all existence as manifestations. According to them, when a person wishes to experience any enjoyments of the five senses, the principal will manifest those objects, such as sound and so forth.

To summarise the Samkhyas' viewpoint, from the principal (1), the great one (2) arises, and from the great one arises pride (3). Then there is the person (4). This accounts for four of the twenty-five classes of objects of knowledge. Pride leads to the collection of sixteen, which includes the five sense objects – form, sound, odour, taste and tangible objects (9). In addition to these five sense objects, the collection of sixteen includes the eleven faculties: the five mental faculties of the eye, the ears, the nose, the tongue and the skin; the five physical faculties of speech, arms, legs, anus and genitalia; and the intellectual faculty (20). The final five of the twenty-five classes are the elements: earth, water, fire, wind and space (25).

The Samkhyas assert the principal as the great one, which is both cause and effect. The collection of the sixteen – the five sense objects and the eleven faculties – are said to be only effects. The person is neither cause nor effect. As mentioned here, the specific characteristic of the person is that it is *neither nature nor the principal of expression*.

The commentary continues: *The Enumerators posit that out of the twenty-five classes of objects of knowledge the principal has the five characteristic qualities of being permanent, unitary and so forth... – it is permanent because, the Samkhyas assert, it does not change.*

There are actually six characteristics of the principal: it is a permanent entity for it doesn't change (1); it is unitary as it is partless (2); it is all-pervasive (3); it is the origin of all manifestations (4); it is merely an object and not awareness (5); and it is the equilibrium of the qualities of courage, particle and darkness (6).

You can look up these classifications, which I have presented previously.¹

The commentary continues: *...is the cause for the various expressions and migrators. Courage, particle and darkness are other words or terms for happiness, suffering and equanimity. Other terms also used in the texts are 'lightness' (instead of courage) and 'motility' (instead of particle). When*

¹ Tenets were taught in 1986-7, and 2001. References include: Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, pp.321-327 and Sopa and Hopkins, *Cutting Through Appearances*, pp. 158-165.

these three characteristics – courage, particle and darkness – are in equilibrium, this is what the Samkhyas strongly assert as the principal. When they are in disharmony, they are migrators or expressions or manifestations of the principal.

2.3.2.3.1.3.2. Repudiating it

Having presented the Samkhyas' position, the **Madhyamika** go on to repudiate it. This has two subdivisions:

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1. Actual

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.2. The fault does not apply to the Madhyamika

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1. Actual

This is further subdivided into three:

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.1. Refuting that a partless permanent can be the nature of the expressions

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.2. Refuting it to be permanent

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.3. Refuting that it would be impossible for something to first not exist and then to generate newly

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.1. Refuting that a partless permanent can be the nature of the expressions

128. *For one to have three natures
Is invalid. Hence it does not exist.
Likewise, qualities do not exist
Because they each have three aspects.*

129ab. *If there are no qualities, then also the existence
Of sound becomes not tenable.*

The commentary reads:

Take the subject 'object of knowledge' – it follows it is unsuitable for forms and so forth, and for a singular partless principal to have three natures of happiness and so forth – because it becomes impossible for them to be one. If that is impossible, it is also impossible for them to be many, and thus they are completely non-existent.

For that reason, a partless principal in the nature of three qualities does not exist. Likewise, the qualities themselves are not truly existent one, because each of these has again three qualities. If upon this analysis the principal with three equal qualities does not exist, then also the existence of the five objects of forms and so forth becomes far-fetched (not tenable), as the five mere objects are accepted as expressions of the primary principal.

The **Madhyamikas'** logic here is this: if the principal can be said to be three separate qualities, how can you (i.e. the Samkhyas) assert the principal as unitary or singular? This assertion is untenable. Furthermore, the Madhyamikas argue that while the principal cannot be singular, it also is impossible for it to be many. All three qualities could not be the single partless entity you assert, so it couldn't be many either. For anything to exist, it has to be either singular or many. If it is neither, then the conclusion has to be that it does not exist.

The commentary continues: *For that reason, a partless principal in the nature of three qualities does not exist.* So, having refuted the Samkhyas' assertion, with the argument that if such a principal is neither one nor many, it becomes completely non-existent – *a partless principal in the nature of three qualities cannot exist.* It is quite clear if you follow the logic.

Likewise, the mere qualities themselves are not truly existent one, because each of these has again three qualities. The Madhyamikas point out the absurdity in the Samkhyas' assertion – *each of them has a further three qualities, so they cannot be a truly existent one. If upon this analysis, the principal with three equal qualities does not exist, then also the existence of the five objects of forms and so forth becomes far-fetched or not tenable, meaning that it is impossible for them to exist ...as the five mere objects are accepted as expressions of the primary principal.*

The logic repudiating the Samkhyas' position is that the qualities themselves are not truly existent. This means that the qualities themselves would have to have further qualities, meaning they cannot truly exist as a unitary quality. Therefore, the principal with three qualities cannot exist, and if that does not exist, then even the five objects, which the Samkhyas exert as being expressions of the principal, also become untenable.

The next four lines of verse are:

129cd. *It also becomes impossible for non-sentient,
Clothes and so forth to have happiness etc.*

130ab. *If functionalities exist in the nature of the
cause,
Haven't functionalities already been analysed?*

As the commentary explains:

Because they are inanimate matter, it follows it is impossible for the subject of the clothes and so forth to be of one simultaneously established substance with happiness, suffering and equanimity.

If the functionalities that are expressions, such as clothes, exist truly in the nature of happiness, suffering and equanimity, which is their cause, then haven't the true existence of functionalities already been analysed, that is they have already been refuted as true.

It is quite clearly explained here that *the subject of the clothes and so forth cannot possibly be happiness, suffering and equanimity. So, if the functionalities that are expressions, such as clothes, exist truly in the nature of happiness, suffering and equanimity, which is their cause, then haven't the true existence of functionalities already been analysed, implies that they have indeed already been analysed and refuted as true existence.*

The next lines of verse are:

130cd. *Your cause is happiness and the like,
From that, clothes and the like do not arise.*

131ab. *Happiness and the like arise from clothes and
the like,
Because it does not exist, happiness and the like
do not exist.*

The commentary explains:

If, as according to you, the cause of clothes and the like is the principal in which the three parts of happiness, suffering and equanimity are in equilibrium, then clothes and the like cannot arise from the principal because this principal is impossible.

If happiness and the other qualities are generated from clothes and the like then, because clothes and other objects do not subsequently exist, also the principal that contains the three equal parts of happiness and so forth becomes non-existent, because a result without a cause is impossible. It is unsuitable

for you to accept this because you accept the principal to be a permanent functionality.

What is being refuted here is that the clothes and so forth are produced by the principal: if its *three parts of happiness, suffering and equanimity are in equilibrium, then clothes and the like cannot arise from the principal because this principal is impossible*. This principal was refuted earlier, and this argument follows that earlier reasoning.

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.2. Refuting it to be permanent

131cd. Happiness and so forth

Are never observed as permanent.

132. If the particulars of happiness exist,

Why is the experience not apprehended?

If it becomes subtle,

How can it be coarse or subtle?

133ab. Since it stops being coarse and becomes subtle

The coarse and subtle are impermanent.

The commentary explains:

It follows that the nature of happiness and so forth never exists as permanent – because it is not observed as such by prime cognition. In case the particulars of happiness exist as permanent functionalities, then why is the experience of happiness not apprehended at the time of experiencing suffering? It follows that one does apprehend it.

If that very happiness becomes subtle at that time, how can it be coarse and then abandon that status and be subtle? It follows it cannot do that - because it is permanent. Because happiness and the like stop being subtle and become coarse, and stop being coarse and become subtle, therefore this subtle and coarse phenomena become impermanent.

The first part here is quite clear. *It follows that the nature of happiness and so forth never exists as permanent – because it is not observed as such by prime cognition*. This follows the earlier Madhyamika presentation that it is not possible for it to be permanent.

In case the particulars of happiness exist as permanent functionalities, then why is the experience of happiness not apprehended at the time of experiencing suffering? The Samkhyas assert that, at the time of the cause, the effect is there but is not yet manifested; in other words, the effect or result is there at the time of the cause. That is what the Madhyamikas are refuting here.

As mentioned earlier, if happiness had the quality of suffering as well, then when one experiences happiness, one would also have to experience suffering as well. *In case the particulars of happiness exist as permanent functionalities, then why is the experience of happiness not apprehended at the time of experiencing suffering?* So, why doesn't one experience happiness if it is also part of the quality? This is a rhetorical question.

The Samkhya then say: *If that very happiness becomes subtle at that time...* They assert that when we are experiencing suffering, there is happiness, but because it is subtle, it is not experienced. This is refuted by the Madhyamika, who say, *how can it be coarse and then abandon that status and become subtle? It follows it cannot do that – because it is permanent*. Since

the Samkhyas said earlier that it is a permanent functionality, which means it cannot change. So if it is coarse, how could it change to subtle? That is the absurdity being pointed out to the Samkhyas.

Because happiness and the like stop being subtle and become coarse, and stop being coarse and become subtle, therefore this subtle and coarse phenomena become impermanent. The Madhyamikas prove there is a change, therefore the subtle and coarse phenomena becomes impermanent, which nullifies the Samkhyas' assertion of happiness and so on as being permanent.

133ab. Similarly, why do you not assert

All functionalities to be impermanent?

134ab. If the coarse is not distinct from happiness,

Then happiness is clearly impermanent.

The commentary explains:

Likewise, why do you not posit the subject of all functionalities as impermanent? It follows that is suitable – because they change in their nature from one to the other.

Is the coarse cause of different substantial establishment from happiness or not? In case of the first, because one still experiences happiness although the coarse cause stops, one has a clear experience of happiness, and it is not a coarse cause. If it is not of different substance, then happiness clearly becomes impermanent because when the coarse cause stops, happiness also stops. If that is accepted, then the permanent nature of happiness and the other qualities wanes.

Here the Madhyamikas ask, *likewise why do you not posit the subject of all functionalities as impermanent? It follows that it suitable – because they change in their nature from one to the other*. If the characteristic of impermanence is that something changes in nature from one moment to the next, then if they change, they have to be impermanent.

Next, the Madhyamikas ask: *Is the coarse cause of different substantial establishment from happiness or not? In the first case, because one still experiences happiness although the coarse cause stops, one has a clear experience of happiness, and it is not a coarse cause*.

In the second instance, *if it is not of different substance, then happiness clearly becomes impermanent because when the coarse cause stops, happiness also stops. If that is accepted, then the permanent nature of happiness and the other qualities wanes*. Thus, the Samkhyas' assertion is untenable.

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.3. Refuting that it would be impossible for something to first not exist and then to generate newly

I will go through this section quickly, as it is quite clear when you read it. There are four lines of verse:

134cd. In case you say whatever is non-existent
Cannot generate because of not existing,

135ab. Then although not asserting it,
You abide on the generation of the unclear.

The commentary explains:

If your assertion is that for something to generate it has to exist at the time of the cause, then something that does not exist at the time of the cause cannot generate, because it does not exist in the nature of the cause. So what is your meaning of 'generate'?

Samkhyas: The nature that, although existing earlier, did not appear as object to the awareness at that time, is now clearly revealed.

Madhyamaka: Because you accept the clearly revealed that does not exist as generated at the time of the cause, then although you do not posit the new generation of something that did not exist earlier, you abide on that view. You accept the meaning, and merely do not accept the name.

Or: Although you do not posit the new generation of a previously non-existent particular, i.e. expression, you need to accept that you abide in this view.

If your assertion is that for something to generate it has to exist at the time of the cause... refers to the uncommon way in which the Samkhyas assert or posit cause and effect. They assert that because the effect has the same nature as the cause, it has to exist as a cause. If it does not exist at the time of the cause, they argue, how can something of the same nature be revealed as its effect?

However, asserting that the effect exists at the time of the cause is an absurd position. That is what the **Madhyamikas** are refuting in the commentary when they say: *...then something that does not exist at the time of the cause cannot generate, because it does not exist in the nature of the cause.* So what is your meaning of 'generate' or 'produce'? This is the question being put to the Samkhyas.

The **Samkhya** respond: *The nature that, although existing earlier, did not appear as object to the awareness at that time, is now clearly revealed.* They are saying that, at the time of the cause, the fact is invisible. When the cause generates or produces it becomes visible. For example, the sprout exists at the time of the seed, but it is invisible at that time. When the actual sprout becomes visible to the naked eye of ordinary beings, then that is when we would refer to being generated or produced.

The **Madhyamika** refute that with the following lines:

*135cd. If the effect abides in the cause, then
One would eat faeces while eating food.*

*136ab. One would have to include the price
Of the cotton seeds when buying cotton.*

Then the commentary explains:

In the case where the result abides in the cause without being of different nature, then it follows one would eat faeces when eating food – because the nature of the food and the nature of the faeces are partlessly one. This is because you accept the principal as the nature of phenomena, mode of abiding, ultimate and as a partless permanent, as well as accepting that the nature of food and the nature of faeces as one.

Further, one would have to put the price of cotton onto the cotton seeds when buying cotton. It follows they would be suitable to be worn – because the nature of the cotton cloth and the nature of the cotton seed are partlessly one.

The reasoning here is that, because faeces are the effect or result of eating food, then if the effect exists at the time of the cause, this implies that faeces would exist at the time of the food. So when you consumed food, you would be consuming faeces!

This line of reasoning follows the Samkhya's earlier assertion that the nature of the cause (food) and the effect

(faeces) are partlessly one. *This is because you accept the principal as the nature of phenomena, mode of abiding, ultimate and as a partless permanent, as well as accepting that the nature of food and the nature of faeces as one.*

Further, one would have to put the price of cotton onto the cotton seeds when buying cotton. So, if one were to buy cottonseed, one would have to pay the same amount that one would pay for the clothing produced from the cottonseed, *because the nature of the cotton cloth and the nature of the cotton seed are partlessly one.*

Again, according to the Samkhyas' assertion, the clothing would already exist in the cottonseed. Therefore, one could just wear cottonseed as clothing, as the clothing already exists! These are the logical fallacies brought about by the Samkhyas' position.

The next lines present the **Samkhyas'** answer:

*136ab. If worldly beings do not see it due to delusion,
This reality is determined through knowledge.*

*137. Because also worldly beings have this
knowledge
Why should they not see?
If the worldly are not valid,
Then also the perception of the particulars is
untrue.*

The commentary explains:

Samkhyas: What about if, even though the two are of one nature, worldly beings cannot see the result at the time of the cause because of being deluded, and therefore do not wear the seeds.

Madhyamika: Well then, as you the Enumerators accept your teacher Rishi Lingkye and others to be omniscient, and that you know that the result exists at the time of the cause because they have determined this reality with their knowledge, then you eat faeces when eating food. Because in your system also worldly beings can understand reality, why should they not see that the result exists at the time of the cause? It follows they see it - because they know that the Enumerator has determined that the result exists at the time of the cause.

Or: That the teacher referred to in the earlier line who is accepted to know reality, is seen insisting on wearing cotton clothes and not cotton seeds, makes it clear that the result does not exist at the time of the cause.

Thus, the **Samkhyas** assert that *even though the effect and cause are of one nature, worldly beings cannot see the result at the time of the cause because of being deluded, and therefore do not wear the cotton seeds.*

The **Madhyamikas** refute that by saying: *Well then, as you the Enumerators accept your teacher Rishi Lingkye and others to be omniscient, and that you know that the result exists at the time of the cause because they have determined this reality with their knowledge, then you eat faeces when eating food.* So they are saying that, since this is what is being asserted by your teacher, who you consider as omniscient, then the fallacy would have to follow. What is being refuted here is the Samkhyas' earlier assertion that the effect exists at the time of the cause because they are of the same nature. Yet worldly beings don't see this. So *...because in your system also worldly beings can understand reality, why should they not see the result exists at the time of the cause?*

It follows they see it — because they know that the Enumerator has determined that the result exists at the time of the cause. So since worldly beings know that the principal has determined that the result exists at the time of the cause, then that means you are able to understand or see that.

Another way to present the Madhyamikas' argument is: *That the teacher referred to in the earlier line who is accepted to know reality, is seen insisting on wearing cotton clothes and not cotton seeds, makes it clear that the result does not exist at the time of the cause. So your teacher himself wears clothes and not cottonseed. That in itself shows you cannot possibly see the effect at the time of the cause.*

Samkhyas: Because the perception of worldly beings is not a prime cognition they do not realise it.

Madhyamika: Well then, it also follows that their perception of the particular expression that became a manifest entity is also untrue - because the perception of worldly beings is not a prime cognition.

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.2. The fault does not apply to the Madhyamaka

We can leave this for our next session. Although we have covered quite a lot of material this evening, it is not too incomprehensible or difficult to understand if you go through the text and read it slowly. So you can go over the text and make an attempt to understand the meaning.

The assertions presented in these teachings are those of the Samkhya scholars of the past. I am not sure whether there are still scholars or followers of this system in this day and age.

Again, if you are interested in these different schools of tenets, what their assertions are and how they have been refuted, then it is good to get an understanding as explained here in the text. You can also refer to other texts that explain these systems of thought.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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