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## Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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Please generate a good motivation for listening to the teachings, thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to do that, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'. Having some motivation to precede listening to the teachings benefits our practice.

## 2. THE ELABORATE EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

### 2.1. Understanding the view

#### 2.1.1 An explanation of the two truths (CONT.)

This heading has three sub-outlines:

2.1.1.1. An explanation of the two truths

2.1.1.2. Definition of the two truths

2.1.1.3 Characteristics of the person who has understood the two truths

#### 2.1.1.2. DEFINITION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

With regard to the definition of the two truths there is a slight difference in the way the definition is posited here, compared with the Introduction to the Middle Way. Even though the meaning is ultimately the same, it looks different, and is done so for different purpose.

#### 2.1.1.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSON WHO HAS UNDERSTOOD THE TWO TRUTHS

*Regarding this, two aspects of transitory being  
are seen, [3]*

*Yogis and ordinary beings.*

*The ordinary transitory being*

*Is harmed by the yogic transitory being,*

*And yogis are harmed as well through  
distinctions [4ab]*

*Of awareness by the one above.*

There are two types of beings - the yogi and the ordinary being. The ordinary being is harmed by the yogi, and the yogi is also harmed by higher yogis through distinctions of awareness.

The point of reference of 'regarding this' is the person. 'Transitory being' actually conveys the definition of person. So when it says 'regarding this, two aspects of transitory beings are seen', transitory being is actually given as the definition of the point of reference, which is the person. Even 'transitory being' does not really convey the complete meaning of the Tibetan word, which is comprised of two syllables - transitory and dependent. Transitory and dependent is given as a definition of the point of reference - the person. Why? Because first of all the person changes momentarily and that's why 'transitory' is used. It is dependent because the person is the 'I' labelled in dependence on the aggregates.

After having given the definition of person, it says that there are two aspects or types of person, the yogi and the ordinary being.

A yogi is a person who possesses the special union of calm abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness in their mental continuum, which would make that yogi a Madhyamaka. Ordinary being refers to Realists and so forth, who assert true existence.

*The ordinary transitory being*

*Is harmed by the yogic transitory being,*

The next two lines basically say that the yogi harms the ordinary transitory being. What this means is that the view of the ordinary transitory being is harmed by the Madhyamaka yogi. The view of the ordinary transitory being asserts true existence and inherent existence, which is the view harmed by the Madhyamaka yogi with different reasonings. For example, the reasoning of one and many, that things are never truly existent one or many. Or they may use the reasoning of dependent arising and so forth, using such syllogisms as: take the subject sprout - it lacks true existence - because it is a dependent arising. This kind of reasoning harms the view that asserts true existence.

Here one shouldn't confuse the lack of inherent existence with a lack of existence. Just because an object does not exist inherently does not mean that it also doesn't exist at all. Lacking inherent existence does not preclude existence. The meaning that we should contemplate is that objects are dependent arisings. Objects arise in dependence on causes and conditions and therefore lack this independent nature, i.e. lack being independent from causes and conditions. Objects exist interdependently. Interdependent existence means that objects lack the independence that exists independently of causes and conditions. That is what is not there. What is there is that objects exist in dependence on the accumulation of causes and conditions.

*And yogis are harmed as well through distinctions*

*Of awareness by the one above.*

Here the word 'harm' has a more figurative meaning, while the word 'harm' in the context of the fourth line has a more literal meaning. The reasoning of the Madhyamaka yogi harms the wrong views of the Realists in the same way as a valid eye-consciousness harms the perception of a white conch shell as yellow. If one had a perception of the white conch shell as yellow, but then regained proper sight, seeing that the conch shell was actually white, then that harms the perception of the white conch shell as yellow. In this context the harm is really meant in a literal sense.

But in the sixth line the harm is more figurative. It means more to outshine. First of all, yogis harm ordinary worldly beings, the Realists, but then the lower yogis are harmed by the higher yogis. Secondly it means that the higher yogis outshine the lower yogis. Because they are higher, they outshine the lower yogis, which is the more figurative meaning of the word 'harm' used here.

According to Gyaltsab Rinpoche's commentary, if it is seen from the point view of bodhisattvas of a different continuum, it is meant figuratively. The high yogis outshine the lower yogis because of the greater power of their mind and so forth.

It can also be looked at from the point of view of just one person, who moves from being a lower yogi to being a high yogi. From that point of view it becomes more literal because the higher realisation does do away with the lower realisation, and its associated faults. For example the path of seeing is not able to harm the seeds of the innate true-grasping; for that the path of meditation is needed. If we think about what is actually harming true

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grasping, then it can only be the wisdom realising emptiness.

If you really think about how the wisdom realising emptiness harms true grasping, then we can relate it very nicely to our Dharma practice. Contemplating how one can counteract the different delusions, how the wisdom realising emptiness counteracts true-grasping, and thinking about the mechanics behind the whole process is very useful for one's practice. Applying that to one's mind is very useful.

The point of all that was mentioned above is to show that if the wisdom that understands ultimate truth can not even be harmed by the wisdom understanding conventional truth, then there is no need to mention that it would be harmed by the grasping at partless particles. It also shows that the wisdom understanding ultimate truth on the other hand can harm all extreme views.

The higher views always harm the lower views. For example the Sautrantika and the Vaibhashika assert the existence of partless particles, and objects that are an accumulation of partless particles. The Mind Only assert phenomena that exist truly. The Svatantrika-Madhyamaka assert inherent existence. So the reasoning of the Mind Only refutes the point of view of the Sautrantika and the Vaibhashika, i.e. the existence of partless particles. The reasoning of the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka refutes the assertion of true existence by the Mind Only. The reasoning of the Prasangika refutes the assertion of inherent existence by the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka. In such a way, the lower tenets are always refuted by the superseding tenets.

## 2.1.2. REFUTING OBJECTIONS

2.1.2.1. Refuting objections of the Realists in general

2.1.2.2. Refuting objections by Mind Only

### 2.1.2.1. REFUTING OBJECTIONS OF THE REALISTS IN GENERAL

Here the worldly beings are the beings whose view is common to the Realists. This point is comprised of six lines.

*Through examples asserted by both, [4cd]  
And because of no investigation towards a  
result.*

*Transitory beings see objects and [5]  
Believe them to exist perfectly,  
Not like an illusion; therefore here  
The yogi and the transitory being disagree.*

The **Realists** reply to the reasoning of the Madhyamaka yogi, 'My dear Madhyamaka, your reasoning doesn't harm us in the least, because you don't have any valid reasoning that could establish the lack of true existence'.

Here the **Madhyamaka** will say, 'Reason not established, there is a valid reasoning with which one can prove the lack of true existence'. The way the Madhyamaka does this is by way of examples that are accepted by the Realists as well as the Madhyamaka, such as the example of the illusion, the dream and so forth. With these examples the Madhyamaka can establish the lack of true existence to the Realists. The Madhyamaka reply is, 'There exists a valid concordant example for both our systems, and that's why I can prove the lack of true existence'.

As you may recall, *if there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence, then that object is false. If appearance and existence are concordant, then that object is true.*

What the line 'And because of no investigation towards a result' means is, 'You Realists say that objects exist truly. If so then there is no point in practising the six perfections of generosity and so forth in order to attain the result of a complete Buddha, because everything exists truly and inherently'. This line states an argument by the Madhyamaka, 'According to you there is no point in practising generosity and the six perfections because in order to attain the result of a buddha, because everything exists inherently.'

The Madhyamaka says, 'Even though there is a lack of true existence, there is no problem with practising the six perfections in order to obtain the state or the result of enlightenment. Even though the practice of the six perfections and the state of enlightenment are not found at the time of analysis, they exist nominally and are practised nominally'.

*Transitory beings see objects and  
Believe them to exist perfectly,  
Not like an illusion; therefore here*

The yogi and the transitory being disagree. Both kinds of transitory beings see different objects, such as a fire and so forth, but the difference is that the ordinary transitory being accepts these objects to be a perfect meaning, i.e. existing truly, existing perfectly, existing inherently. They don't accept them to be like an illusion, and that's why yogis and Realists disagree here.

*Review*

What is the basis of the division of the two truths?

*Student: Objects of knowledge.*

What is the meaning of objects of knowledge?

*Student: Objects perceived by a valid cognisor.*

If you give the definition, then give the actual one. An object of knowledge is an object that is suitable to be made an object of awareness.

What is purpose of saying that the object of knowledge has a two-fold division of the two truths, and not just saying that first we have objects of knowledge and then we have the two truths. What is the purpose of saying that objects of knowledge is the basis of division for the two truths?

*Student: It's to point out that the Buddha's omniscient mind can see both conventional and ultimate truth at the same time.*

That was more the explanation of why the Buddha's consciousness is referred to 'omniscient consciousness', which is directly linked to the two-fold division of ultimate truth and conventional truth. Here we are talking more about the object of knowledge. Objects of knowledge are the basis for the division of the two truths, because the two truths are the objects to be known. When it says objects of knowledge, it gives a meaning to the etymology of objects of knowledge. Objects of knowledge are given as the basis for the division of the two truths, because the two truths are the objects to be known.

What are the two truths?

*Student: Conventional and ultimate.*

If it exists, is it necessarily either of those two? Is there pervasion that if it exists that it is either of those two?

*Student: Yes.*

Then what about the subject 'the two truths'?

*Student: The subject 'two truths' is conventional truth.*

That was a very good answer. [Laughter]

If there are no more than two truths, then what happened to the Four Truths? Geshe-la explained it at the beginning of the class, but I think I forgot to translate that one. The truth of cessation falls into ultimate truth, and the other three truths fall into conventional truth. Geshe-la asks what happens to the Four Truths if two truths are supposed to be enough.

First let's posit the four noble truths.

*Students: Suffering, cause, cessation and path.*

Is the noble truth of suffering a conventional truth or an ultimate truth?

*Students: Conventional.*

The origin of suffering?

*Students: Conventional.*

The truth of the path?

*Students: Conventional.*

And cessation?

*Students: Ultimate.*

The Four Noble Truths are contained within the two truths, which is good to know. If somebody were to say that because of the Four Noble Truths there are more than two truths, then the answer would be that there is no pervasion. It is good to train in these types of argument to develop your understanding.

Is the conventional truth true or false?

*Students: False.*

Is ultimate truth false or true?

*Students: True.*

What is the meaning of true and false?

*Student: If it is false there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence*

What is the meaning of true?

*Student: There is no discrepancy.*

So that appearance and existence are concordant.

*[Geshe-la holds up a paper serviette]*

Is that paper serviette conventional truth or ultimate truth?

*Students: Conventional truth.*

Is there a discrepancy between appearance and existence?

*Students: Yes.*

What is the discrepancy between appearance and existence, because it appears as a serviette, and it is a serviette?

*Student: It appears to be inherently existing white paper.*

Why does it appear to exist from its own side?

*Student: We haven't overcome the cognitive afflictions that make it appear from its own side. We haven't reached omniscience and therefore things appear from their own side.*

First of all there is not really a pervasion to your argument, because the bodhisattva on the final uninterrupted path has not abandoned the obscuration to knowledge, and things do not have the appearance of true existence to such a bodhisattva.

The reason that the object appears intrinsically is because it doesn't really appear as if it is posited by the mind, but it appears as if it exists from its own side.

One has to know the mode in which an object appears as truly existing. Of course one can say it appears as existing truly because one hasn't abandoned this or that, but it is also

good to know the mode. For example saying, 'Oh it appears as truly existing because...', and then giving the mode of how it appears, e.g. 'It appears as truly existing because it appears as if it exists from its own side and not posited by the mind'.

The serviette is false, because it appears as if it exists from its own side, even though it actually is posited by the mind. The lack of the existence of the paper from its own side is its ultimate truth. Why is that true? The serviette itself has a discrepancy between appearance and existence and that's why it is false. But the emptiness of the serviette is true, because there is no discrepancy between appearance and existence. Why is it that there is no discrepancy between appearance and the existence of the emptiness of the serviette?

*Student: Because it is its true mode of existence, it doesn't exist from its own side.*

Geshe-la's question is why is the emptiness of the object true? Why is there no discrepancy between appearance and existence of the emptiness of the object?

*Student: Because the emptiness doesn't exist from its own side? The appearance and the existence of the object are the same.*

*Another student: To the wisdom of emptiness there is no discrepancy between the appearance and the existence.*

Does the wisdom realising emptiness not possess true appearance? How does one define whether an object exists the way it appears or whether it doesn't exist the way it appears? That is always decided by its existence relative to its main object possessor. For example, the main object possessors of outer objects such as different forms and so forth are the five sense consciousnesses. If an object doesn't exist the way it appears to its main object possessor, then there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence, and the object doesn't exist in the way it appears to exist. Since one can say the main object possessor of emptiness is the wisdom realising emptiness directly, then one can say that emptiness is true, because emptiness appears to the wisdom realising emptiness in exactly the way it exists. But there are different types of wisdom realising emptiness that have the appearance of true existence, such as the inferential cogniser realising emptiness.

The serviette doesn't exist the way it appears. Why? Because it doesn't exist as it appears to its main object possessor, the eye-consciousness. The serviette, for example, exists in the way it appears to omniscient consciousness. Just because the serviette exists in the way it appears to omniscient consciousness, doesn't mean to say that the serviette exists in the way that it appears to exist.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett  
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak  
Edited Version*

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