

Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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As we have all established the motivation, we can now continue with the meditation [*tonglen meditation*].

Just reinforce your motivation.

I hope you have a copy of the commentary that we are going through. It reads:

As to the second (the reason of investigating the cause called the Diamond Splinter), the root text says:

49. *A thing is not produced from itself
Nor from another, also not from both
Nor causelessly either, thus it does not
Exist inherently by way of its own entity.*

The commentary continues:

Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom* says:

Not from self, not from other,
Not from both, nor from without cause:
Things do not arise
At any place, at any time.

This verse shows the source of verse 49 of the root text that we have just quoted, which is Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom*. The commentary continues:

To quote Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*,

Things do not arise from themselves;
How could they arise from others?
This really summarises the essential meaning
Of the commentary to *Fundamental Wisdom*.

This one verse of the root text, verse 49, contains the essence or meaning of Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom* and Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*. To be able to summarise the entire meaning of the profound and extensive scriptures of Nagarjuna and the great master Chandrakirti into four lines truly shows Atisha's amazing qualities and realisations.

In *Fundamental Wisdom*, where it says *not from self and not from others* and so forth, this means that things do not arise from themselves and from others and so forth. The objection here as to things arising from themselves, is directed at the non-Buddhist school of tenets called Samkhya, which asserts the view that the cause and the effect are of the same nature: they propose that things arise from themselves or from their own nature. The assertion that things arise or are produced from others is made by all Buddhist schools of tenets below the Madhyamika school of the Svatantrika.

The verse also objects to the assertion by the Samkhya and Vaibhashika schools that things are produced from both self and others; the objection here is that things are *not produced from both*. And *nor from without cause* is particularly objecting to the view of the non-Buddhist Carvaka school which, although it does not necessarily say that there's no cause and effect, does assert that certain things are produced without cause. For example,

they say that the eyes of peacock's feathers and the sharpness of thorns arise from their own nature and not from causes, nor are they made by anyone.

Then the commentary reads:

In explaining this meaning, the commentary¹ to the *Supplement* highlights that the notion of saying here (in *Fundamental Wisdom*) 'NOT'² relates to the refutation of production from self and so forth, which actually is the reason to reject existence. So it does not relate to existence itself, for the rejection of existence is implied.

The commentary continues:

Therefore, the first half of the verse should not be considered as the reason and the next half as the thesis, (???) rather in overall it presents just the thesis of the rejection of the four extremes of production. This is because if the four extremes of production are rejected, then it would logically establish the lack of inherent production as well as the reason of investigating the cause called the Diamond Splinter; this, in fact, is the intention of the self-commentary. However, it is said in the *Supplement to the Middle Way*, 'It does not arise from itself; how could it arise from something else? It does not arise from self and other together; how could it arise without a cause? Therefore, things are lacking inherent existence'. This clearly presents the syllogistic reason, and accordingly here (verse 49), the last line (it does not exist inherently by way of its own entity) indicates the thesis, *and* the word 'thing' (in the verse) indicates the subject and the rest of the reasons.

This is referring to the root verse that was quoted earlier (verse 49). If we refer to that verse, we can understand that, where the commentary refers to a *sylogistic* statement, the *subject* refers to 'things', which are referred to here as lacking self-production, and the reason for that is given. The syllogism is elaborated in the next paragraph:

Consequently, the syllogistic statement goes like this
- The subject, all internal and external objects, do not arise from themselves, because if they do arise like that, then the fallacy of the pointlessness of production and being infinitely produced cannot be avoided.

When it says here that *all internal and external objects do not arise from themselves*, it means they don't arise from an inherent cause, nor do they arise independently, without depending on a cause. If we proposed that things arose from an inherent cause, there would be an inconsistent consequence, and we would end up saying that there was no point in things being produced, because things were already produced or existed at the time of their causes. Alternatively, we would have to make an absurd assertion that things are produced infinitely.

Then the text continues:

Moreover, the objection below also cannot be avoided. 'If cause and effect were identical, produced and producer would be identical'. Things also do not

¹ Referring to Chandrakirti's self-commentary to his text, *Supplement to the Middle Way*.

² Here you have to refer to the text.

arise from other factors by the way of their own entity.

The idea here, that a result can arise from an inherent cause, also implies that the cause and the effect are one entity or of the same nature. If the cause were to exist inherently, then when you say that the cause and its effects are one entity or of the same nature, it would be no different to saying that they are one identity or a single object. If they are 'one', there is a problem because they should be appearing to our mind as one and not as separate entities. But that's not the case. So, as it says here, *if the cause and effect were identical then the produced and producer would be identical*. Then it wouldn't make any sense to make a statement like, 'the result is a product, whereas the cause is the producer', because they are one or identical.

Basically, the commentary is pointing out two logical problems if we assert the view that things are produced from an inherent cause. If things were to arise inherently, the first problem is that the production of a thing would be redundant or pointless, because the things already existed before or at the time of their cause. Hence, it would be pointless for them to be produced again. If things are produced again then the second logical consequence is untenable, in that the production of things would be infinite; they would continuously be producing.

After establishing that things do not arise from themselves, the commentary proceeds to the statement that things do not arise from others either. It reads:

If they were different by the way of their own entity, then the produced and producers would be unrelated. Consequently, anything should produce everything, and the objection below would be untenable. 'If cause and effect were different, cause and non-cause would be alike'.

It is important that we follow what is written here and then try to think it over, line by line. When it says here that things do not inherently arise, we need to have some idea of the situation if they did arise inherently. We have to bring that into our mind. So when we talk about the lack of inherent existence of particular things, it is not necessarily the case that we take on the task of actually searching for that thing itself. Rather, what is required here is to think that, if it is said that things do not exist inherently, then what would it mean if things were to exist inherently? And, if things exist inherently, how do we measure it if things have an inherent existence? In order to understand the lack of inherent existence, it is indispensable for us to recognise the precise measurement of inherent existence.

As mentioned earlier, if cause and effect exist inherently, they become like the same entity, and if that is so, a problem arises. Having understood this, however, doesn't necessarily mean that we don't hold on to the view that things *don't* arise from an inherent cause. We may still think that things inherently arise from some other cause or some different object. That's why the commentary goes on to reject the idea that not only don't things arise from an inherent cause or arise from themselves, but also from other.

So, we have seen that all internal and external objects do not arise from themselves, because if they did arise like that, then the fallacy of the pointlessness of production and being infinitely produced cannot be avoided.

It now says here that *things also do not arise from other factors by the way of their own entity, so if they were different by the way of their own entity, then the produced and producers would be unrelated*. This concludes that if things arise from others, then the producer and the produced become totally unrelated.

Question to student: Can you clarify your understanding of the problem of things arising inherently from other factors?

Student: If it seems to arise from other factors, then the producer and the produced would be a different entity, and so the two of them would be unrelated. That is the main point – that the two things would be unrelated if they were to arise from others.

Geshe-la: Why do the produced and the producer become unrelated?

Student: Because they each have an entity; those two entities are other in nature to each other. So if the two entities, the entity of the produced and the entity of the producer are 'other' to each other, then they have to be inherently different?

Geshe-la: The main point here is that the word 'inherent' is important, because we are not saying that cause and effect are *not* two separate entities – they are two separate entities. So if the result arises from the cause, the entities of the cause and effect are different from each other; that possibility is not rejected here. However, if we say the effect arises from an *inherently existent* cause, then the cause and effect become inherently separate entities and hence they would become two *totally unrelated* things.

The commentary continues by pointing out the problems that would result from making the assertion that the result arises from a cause that is inherently different from the result. It says *if they were different by the way of their own entity, then the produced and producers would be unrelated. Consequently, anything should produce everything*. We have to see that one of the problems in making that assertion is that anything should produce everything; if the particular thing doesn't require a unique or a specific cause to produce it, then a result can arise from things that are totally unrelated. Therefore, we would not be able to avoid this problem of anything arising from everything.

Then the commentary reads:

This also implies the essence of the reason of rejecting one and many, because it refutes an inherent one through rejecting self-production, and an inherent many through rejecting production from other. The production from both self and other is untenable because the production from either two is untenable.

Basically, the previous reasoning that establishes how things are not produced from the inherent self and others also implicitly establishes the fact that things do not arise inherently as one or many. In our previous teaching, as part of the outline under the *wisdom arisen from thinking by depending upon reason*, there is the reason of investigating the cause called the Diamond Splinter.

Under this topic, we discussed refuting production from the four extremes.

Then we went to study the logical reasoning of investigating the identity to refute one or many.

Basically, this commentary refers to Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom*, which says *not from self, not from others, not from both, not from neither (or causeless)*. *Not from both* can be established by applying the same reason as *not from self* and *not from others*. Now, what follows after this is the reason not from *without cause*, which says:

Nonetheless, the causeless production is also not feasible, because if that were the case, then it would be useless for the farmers in the world to put an effort into farm work for the harvest.

Then the commentary continues:

As it is said, 'Because it is without cause and not depending on other factors, it should either exist all the time or not exist at all', this fault will also be untenable.

We continue with the commentary, verse 50, which reads:

50 *When phenomena are examined
As to whether they are one or many,
They are not seen to exist by way of their own
entity,
And thus are ascertained as not inherently
existent.*

The commentary reads:

With reference to this, the reason presented in the *Descent into Lanka Sutra* says, 'Just as a reflection of the form in a mirror, (things are) devoid of oneness or otherness'. The homage verse of Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom* says, 'Without distinction, without identity'.

The homage verse in *Fundamental Wisdom* is:

I prostrate to the Perfect Buddha,
The best of teachers, who taught that
Whatever is dependently arisen is
Unceasing, unborn,
Unannihilated, not permanent,
Not coming, not going.
Without distinction, without identity,
And free from conceptual construction.

This verse specifically relates to the perception of emptiness of arya beings in meditative equipoise. With respect to the meditative equipoise of arya beings, the only thing that exists is emptiness, because all the appearances of relative truth have subsided. So, from the perspective of the arya's meditative equipoise, no production and the non-existence of any relative truth actually implies the emptiness of that relative truth. Thus, here we are not rejecting the existence of relative truth; we are rejecting inherent existence, what the emptiness is empty of.

Then the commentary continues:

In his text the *Ornament of the Middle Way*, Shantirakshita says, 'Those entities, as asserted by our own [Buddhist schools] and other [non-Buddhist] schools, have no inherent nature at all, because in reality they have neither a singular nor a manifold nature - like a reflected image'. Nonetheless, in order

to present more other reasons or to put the above-mentioned syllogistically,...

Here *nonetheless, in order to present more reasons or to put the above-mentioned syllogistically*, the text is referring to the root verse, verse 50, where this whole argument is put into a formal syllogism.

So:

Nonetheless, in order to present more other reasons or to put the above-mentioned syllogistically, the subject, all the internal and external things, (they) are definitely empty of inherent existence, (because they) do not inherently exist as one-ness or many-ness, (they are) like a reflected form in a mirror.

This statement summarises the whole meaning of the verse, so it is very important to reflect upon this full syllogism. It says that *all internal and external things are empty of inherent existence because they do not inherently exist as one or many* - the latter is the reason. *Things do not exist inherently because they do not inherently exist as one or many*. The statement *they are like a reflected form in a mirror* is just an analogy or example to show how things do not exist inherently.

Objectively not even an atom exists inherently. In terms of establishing or linking the reason to the subject, the syllogistic statement is the subject as before, and (they) do not inherently exist as one-ness (because they) are with parts.

In terms of establishing or linking the reason to the subject, the syllogistic statement means that all internal and external things are the base. The thesis here is that these things are definitely empty of inherent existence. The reason things are empty of inherent existence is that they do not inherently exist as one, or as many. So here, where it says *in terms of establishing or linking the reason to the subject*, the reason is that they do not inherently exist as one or many. So, *establishing that reason to the subject*, which is all internal and external things, means proving that things do not inherently exist as one or as many.

So firstly, we need to establish the subject in relation to the reason: *the subject as before*, which is all internal and external things, *do not inherently exist as one*. The commentary says that *things do not inherently exist as one*, and the reason it gives is because things have parts. This implies that if things are inherently one, they should exist independently, without depending on other factors, such as causes and conditions as well as parts. So, things don't exist on their own, but are dependent on their parts. Even if you take space as an example, it has parts in the sense of having directions. If space didn't have directions, then a plane would not be able to move or be positioned within space. Therefore, because things have parts, we reject the idea that things exist as *one-ness*. Then the text goes on to rejecting the idea of things existing as *many-ness*, or as different.

The subject as before³, (they) do not inherently exist as many-ness (because) logically it is untenable to accept (them) inherently existing as one-ness.

³ The subject is all of the internal and external things.

The text is simply saying that things cannot exist as a single, as one, and that the same reason proves that they can't exist as many-ness or as different.

Then the commentary reads:

As to the authentication of the pervasion ...

So, you look at the syllogistic statement and you establish the subject in relation to the reason. Now, in order to make the reason valid, there should be a *pervasion*.

As to the authentication of the pervasion (to the above syllogism), if it exists inherently (the opposite of the predicate), it must either exist in that way as one-ness or as many-ness, because one-ness and many-ness are mutually exclusive and if something exists then it must exist either as one-ness or as many-ness.

This whole syllogistic statement is important – you have to reflect on it. If you reflect on it, you try to think how all things do not inherently exist due to the reason given. Here, it then talks about the *pervasion*. Suppose, hypothetically, you were to say that things do exist inherently. What mode of existence would they have? The text is saying that there are only two alternatives – to inherently exist as one, or as many; there is no third alternative, just as, generally speaking, all things can be included into two categories of one or many. Therefore, here the *pervasion* says that *if it exists inherently, then it must either exist in that way as one-ness or as many-ness because one-ness and many-ness are mutually exclusive*. ‘Mutually exclusive’ means that to our perception when one possibility appears, the possibility of the other one will be negated; they cannot appear to the mind at the same time.

You should discuss the -so-called ‘four points of analysis’ in your next discussion session. The four points are: asserting the object of negation; asserting the pervasion; asserting the absence of one-ness; and asserting the absence of many-ness. On the basis of such a contemplation of the four points, we can understand the meaning of emptiness, the lack of inherent existence of things, such as a person. If a person is inherently existent, then they must be inherently existent as one or inherently existent as many. You can apply these four points of analysis to the statement that a person is devoid of inherent existence because it doesn't exist inherently as one and it doesn't inherently exist as many. Knowledge of emptiness arises on the basis of negation of an inherently existent self. Therefore, the key to gaining knowledge of emptiness is identifying the object of negation, which is the inherently existent self. The next important thing is ascertaining the pervasion, which relates to the syllogistic statement. You should discuss the meaning of pervasion. Similarly, you should go into the analysis of whether a person exists inherently as one or many; if it is inherently one or many with its basis of designation the five aggregates, what logical problems will arise?

It is particularly important to precisely identify the object of negation. There is a passage by Shantideva that says: ‘Without identifying the negated object, its non-existence will not be apprehended’. Therefore, in order to precisely identify the object of negation, it is important to observe closely how the negated self appears to the grasping at

the self we experience at an innate level. What is the reality of the self to that innate self-grasping? It is very important to recognise that self. If we recognise that self as totally lacking any support by valid cognition, and as just a mental fabrication and an erroneous or false view, then we can infer that the self-grasping is a misconception, and in reality, it is non-inherent with respect to any phenomena.

We talk about the selflessness of a person and of other phenomena and what the differences are, and also that the different schools of tenets have different views on selflessness, depending on their interpretation of the negated self. For example, we can talk about the self with respect to the selflessness of a person – in terms of the self as being a permanent, partless and independent self, or as a substantially existent or self-sufficient self. However, this self is not the object of negation here, as we are talking about the Madhyamika view of emptiness of true existence or inherent existence. The negated self here refers to the inherently existent self. Therefore, in pursuing the knowledge of selflessness or emptiness, it is said the most important point is to identify the exact self that is negated or what the emptiness is empty of.

Student: Sandup, don't we have to say that the self-sufficient and substantial self is refuted by the Prasangika as their gross object of refutation but not their subtle object of refutation? And their understanding of what that means is different from the Svatantrika-Madhyamika?

Sandup: Yes, that's true, but here we are talking about the self as the object of negation with respect to the view of emptiness according to Prasangika Madhyamika.

Geshe-la: The Prasangika school don't accept any notion of substantial existence because they say everything is imputed existence.

The translation of the commentary on *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* called *Joy of the Blossomed Excellent* by Panchen Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltzen is used with the kind permission of Sandup Tsering.

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