

**SHORT COURSE with GESHE JAMPHAL**  
Oral translation from the Tibetan by Toh Sze-gee

**NALANDA MONASTERY**

**DAY 1 - 30th August 2014**

**The Introductory Verses from Nagarjuna's Root Wisdom  
(Treatise of the Middle Way)**

**He who taught dependent origination –  
No cessation, and no origination,  
No annihilation and no permanence,  
No coming and no going,  
Neither different nor same –  
This thorough calming of conceptual elaborations:  
To you, who are the supreme speaker  
Among all fully enlightened buddhas, I pay homage.**

NOTE: We are planning on 5 days of teachings, and I'm available on all these days. If you'd like, we could have 2 sessions a day. Just let me know what you would prefer.

The original intention is to base these teachings on a book (requested by His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself) that is yet to be published. This book is on buddhist science, and discusses how Buddhism and science are compatible. It is unclear whether or not this book has been published yet. I have a version on my i-pad, but it is too small to be used in a comfortable way. Therefore, I decided to use a book by His Holiness based on emptiness and the middle way view. This book gives a presentation on objects and object possessors, and how reality is presented according to the buddhist view. Based on this, a method is determined, and based on this method, we can engage in practice.

The Buddha was able to teach in various ways to living beings. All his teachings were based on a **presentation of the basis**, which refers to objects, to phenomena. The Buddha was able to present these according to reality. Whatever did not exist in reality, the Buddha did not accept.

There are coarse and subtler levels of these existent objects, and based on those levels, we can also talk about the object possessors that engage them. These are none other than the consciousnesses of the persons. The Buddha based his teachings on his own experience; he knew phenomena exactly, and explained these in accordance to the different faculties of living beings; we have some that are of sharp, others of middling and still others that are of dull faculties. Therefore, Buddha taught different levels of teachings. All these can be subsumed under the four different philosophical schools.

Among the various objects that exist, the final, **the ultimate object is emptiness**. All the teachings taught by the Buddha were a means for sentient beings to realize emptiness. Once you realize emptiness, you will become liberated from samsara; if you don't realize emptiness, you will not be liberated from samsara. All the teachings the Buddha gave were solely for the purpose of liberating sentient beings.

When we examine the stages of the tenet systems taught by the Buddha, we will understand that they were taught for trainees of various faculties, as follows:

- For those of lower faculties, the Hinayana tenet systems were taught: these are the **Vaibhasika** (*Great Exposition School*) and **Sautrantrika** (*Sutra school*);
- For those of middling faculties, the Buddha taught the **Chittamatra** (*Mind Only School*) and the **Madhyamika Svatantrika** (*Middle Way Autonomy School*) where phenomena are presented as existing by their own character;
- For those of sharp faculties, the highest system, the **Prasangika** (*Middle Way Consequence School*) was taught.

All the lower systems were taught as a method for living beings to realize emptiness according to the highest school. In that way, you should understand that even though Buddha gave different teachings, they were all **methods** for sentient beings to be able to ultimately realize emptiness.

The Buddha taught **three wheels of dharma**:

1. **In the first, he presented the four noble truths** for the sake of the Hinayana trainees;
2. **In the second, the final view of emptiness was presented**. Here the subtlest object, emptiness, was taught. This became the basis of the Mahayana scriptures; and
3. **In the third wheel, the Buddha targeted the Chittamatra disciples**, who were not able to understand the final view of emptiness properly. When they heard this view, they mistook it to refer to an utter non-existence of phenomena. As they were not ready for the final view, the Buddha taught the third view with the intention to explain the **three types of natureness**. In this turning of the wheel, he taught the "**Sutra Unravelling the Thought**", and the "Tathagatagarba" ("**Tathagata Essence Sutra**"). These were methods for the disciples to finally realize emptiness.

*Consciousnesses are also of different levels of subtlety. However, regardless of what is presented, we need to understand that all kinds of stains and bad views are adventitious, and do not enter into the nature of mind. Therefore, living beings can become separated from these stains, as the nature of the mind is clear light – and beings have the potential to attain enlightenment from beginningless time, as explained in the Tathagata Essence Sutra.*

Since the nature of our mind is clear light from beginningless time, we have the **potential to transform**. Indeed we are able to attain the state of full enlightenment, and to transform into the buddha bodies. We need to understand that our minds are not tainted, and that the stains we now have can be eliminated by applying the

antidotes. This means we have the potential to attain all good qualities, including the 4 Kayas (buddha bodies) within our own continuum. Right now, we have in our continuum the **potential** to attain the dharmakaya. This potential for us to attain the final Buddha body (dharmakaya) lies in our own mind. This is something natural, existing since beginningless time, and is a primordial potential that we all possess. In the three turnings of the wheels of dharma Buddha taught the means by which sentient beings can become free from stains. He taught 84,000 heaps of Dharma, so that all obscurations can be eliminated from our continuum, and so that we can attain the dharmakaya.

The final aim of all the teachings of the Buddha is the accomplishment of the dharmakaya - the truth body. If you ask, how does one accomplish this? We should understand that the uncommon cause for the dharmakaya is emptiness. When we think of emptiness, we can consider this from the point of view of

- i. object (emptiness),
- ii. and the object-possessor (the consciousness realizing it).

With such combination of object and object possessor, we are able to separate from all stains in our continuum. In that way, we should understand that the uncommon cause for attaining the truth body is emptiness.

This potential exists naturally within our continuum – **we already have the potential now to realize emptiness and attain the four buddha bodies**. However, **this potential is obscured by stains**. If you look at how the Buddha attained buddhahood, you will see it is through the process of eliminating the stains. Indeed, if you look for the word of “Buddha” in Tibetan, **San-gye**, you will see that:

- i. **“San”** has the connotation of **purification** (ie, all the stains have been purified); and
- ii. **“gye”** has the connotation of **development** (having eliminated all stains, the buddha bodies were developed).

We say that all phenomena are empty of true existence. **The reason for establishing emptiness is dependent arising**. Phenomena exist in a dependent way; there is nothing that exists in an independent way, without depending on other factors:

- ❖ Compounded and uncompounded phenomena are established in dependence on each other;
- ❖ something is a cause in dependence of its effect, and something is an effect in dependence on its cause.
- ❖ Consider a mother and her child: the child is established in dependence on the mother, and the mother is established in dependence on her child, as there is no mother without a child...

In Nagarjuna’s **“Treatise on the Middle Way”** (the introductory praise above) he praises the Buddha in a very particular manner. The Buddha has many qualities of body, speech and mind, but Nagarjuna praised the Buddha for teaching emptiness and dependent arising. Nagarjuna was amazed at this presentation of emptiness;

therefore, even though the Buddha has so many different qualities, he singled out the Buddha's teachings on emptiness and dependent arising.

All compounded phenomena are in the nature of disintegration: they are produced and disintegrate, as they are not able to abide in a permanent manner. We talk about coming and going, different and one, but these are all false appearances: from the ultimate point of view they do not exist. Nagarjuna in his opening stanza of his "**Treatise to the Middle Way**" praised the Buddha for having taught such a doctrine of emptiness, which is without annihilation or permanence, without coming or going; without different or same; free from fabrication.

Nagarjuna composed this expression of worship out of utter amazement at this view, because such a view had never been taught by any other teacher in this continent, on Earth. This view is what enables sentient beings to become liberated from cyclic existence; without this view there is no liberation from cyclic existence.

All other religions, whether they arose before or after the time of the Buddha, propound a doctrine that is based on inherent existence. To give an example, in Christianity there is the idea of a God that has created all things – we don't find this idea of dependent arising; according to Christianity, even we ourselves have been created by God.

To understand this idea of dependent arising let us take an easy example such as a tree. Imagine there is a huge tree that is more than 100 years old. If you think about how it came about, you will understand it will have depended on many previous conditions to become the huge tree it is now. Tracing it back to its earlier causes and conditions, you will see that in the very beginning it arose from a seed. Tracing the origin of that seed, we will see that it came from a previous seed, and so on. Analysing the causes and conditions that bring about a tree, we can see that there are many causes and conditions, which are not adventitious, in the sense that they did not just appear from nowhere. If you want to examine this on a microscopic level, we can even talk about the subtle particles, such as the molecules and atoms, the aggregation of which has eventually brought about this huge tree.

Every kind of phenomenon depends on its respective causes and conditions; there is nothing that exists which does not depend on causes and conditions. From earlier causes and conditions, the later causes and conditions arise.

When we consider the pairs of phenomena as expressed in Nagarjuna's expression of worship (above), we can see that all these pairs are established on dependence, on causes and conditions. Nagarjuna mentions things such as phenomena being without cessation or arising: without arising from causes, there can be no cessation; and arising is a production depending on conditions. Coming or going, one or different...

Nagarjuna praised the Buddha for being such an extraordinary teacher, for giving his teachings on dependent arising that is free from the eight extremes. We should realize that our clear light mind is free from all these objects; it is without cessation or arising, etc.

To elaborate more on the example of this huge tree:

*When you examine this object in detail, you will see that the finer and more detailed your analysis gets, the less solid this tree will become. As you try to trace this tree back to its earlier condition, the seed, you will see that the solidity of the tree disappears. When you examine the seed, where it has come from, you will find an endless line of seeds. When you look inside the seed, you will find that it is made of nothing but particles, molecules and atoms – in this way, the solidity of the seed also disappears. This is one way of applying the teaching of emptiness: you will see that the objects themselves end up disappearing...*

When we examine the nature of conventional appearances and ultimate truth, we could say that they are **one entity but different aspects**. Saying that they are one entity does **not mean** that there is conventional appearance existing on one side, and ultimate truth existing on the other. No, they are of one entity. Conventionalities have the nature of being falsities – they are free from existing truly. Once these conventionalities disappear from our minds, we will see that they do not exist truly.

*Ultimate truth can be seen more clearly from within our subtle mind. When the subtle states of mind – white appearance, red increase and black near attainment – cease, then the clear light mind can manifest.*

To give an example of the difference between conventional appearances and ultimate truths, let us take someone who is not a good person. In order to impress others, this person pretends to be very friendly, kind and warm. Putting out such appearances, he/she hopes that other people will see them as being a nice person, but there is this element of deception, of false appearance. In a similar way, **falsities** in cyclic existence – in samsara – appear to us as being real, as existing truly, when in fact this is not the case.

**These falsities do not appear as falsities, they appear as truths.**

**Because of this disparity, we remain in cyclic existence.**

**It is by knowing falsities as falsities, and truths as truths, that we will be able to become free from our afflictions and attain liberation.**

Going back to our previous example of this pretentious person who is trying to harm others: he/she pretends to be friendly and kind, even though his/her intention could even be to kill others. In reality, despite the appearance of being friendly, this person is actually intending to harm. So we have to become careful around such a person.

In a similar way, you should try to understand the presentation of the two truths, to understand reality as it is. By understanding these two levels, we will be able to attain freedom from samsara and attain the dharmakaya. If someone who is being targeted by the bad person understands what is happening, this person will then not come under the harm of the bad one. In the same way, if we want to protect ourselves from harm and attain liberation, we have to know reality, and try to understand the presentation of objects and object possessors very well.

*Therefore, **we need to know a false object as a false object** - because if we fail to know that, we will stay stuck in cyclic existence. **If we know the false object, we will tread the path to liberation.** In the same way that we would not be tricked by a pretentious person if we knew he/she is false, we will not be tricked by conventional phenomena if we know that they have the nature of obscuration, that they are obscurational phenomena. By understanding the reality of phenomena, by knowing the false as false, we will be able to free ourselves from cyclic existence.*

Even though all that appears to us is in the nature of falsities, in a conventional sense we do not say (or state) that things are like that. We are made up of five physical and mental aggregates; from among them we can point out the mind and the “I” as its main components. We have to realize why our mind and aggregates are not free from stains; and this is because we have many mistaken states of mind. We have **ignorance**, which is confused in relation to how things exist. We can talk about **forms of ignorance that are conceptions of true existence**, and from them arise the negative emotions, **afflictions**. From those, **karma** is created; and karma forces us to undergo **infinite forms of suffering**.

**So: from ignorance, afflictions; from afflictions, the creation of karma which brings about all kinds of sufferings.**

It is crucial for us to understand what objects are false. This is why it is necessary for us to have a presentation of objects. There is a six-fold division of **objects**, namely:

1. Forms
2. Sounds
3. Odours
4. Tastes
5. Objects of touch
6. Phenomena

Correspondingly, we have the six **object possessors**, the six types of consciousness that relate to these objects:

1. Eye consciousness
2. Ear consciousness
3. Nose consciousness
4. Tongue consciousness
5. Body consciousness
6. Mental consciousness

Based on those, we cannot say that there is something that is both this and that division. These are presentations of false conventionalities.

Let's discuss **forms**. Amongst the six sources, we have forms, which are divided into many kinds of shapes and colours; for instance, we can talk about primary and secondary colours. **Forms** in many shapes and colours are the objects of the eye consciousness – they cannot be heard by the ear consciousness, for example. Likewise, **sounds** can only be heard by the ear consciousness, not by the eye or the

other consciousness. In this way, you can see how all these consciousness have their respective objects.

There are many kinds of shapes, round, square etc. To make things simpler, we can talk about good and bad shapes; we can talk about primary and secondary colours. Colours and shapes are seen by the eye consciousness and we can make a debate based on this observation; we can ask - *is there something that is both shape and colour?*

We can talk about colours and shapes that are beautiful and colours that are not beautiful, based on our contact with them. We can have minds of liking and disliking based on the contact we have with these objects. Depending on the objects we come into contact with – including smells, tastes or objects of touch, we will have happy or unhappy minds. We can take them as being good or bad.

We should **analyse** these forms and other objects that we perceive that we come into contact with. How do these six types of objects exist? For example, the colours and shapes we see have their own substantial causes and cooperative conditions. Likewise for sounds, they arise due to their substantial causes and conditions. Without them, could we have any sounds, shapes and so forth?

Let us analyse **karma** – actions and their results. When we encounter certain objects we can experience happiness or sufferings as a result of our karma. But **if we do not encounter the object, these karmas do not ripen**. Even though we have the karma, if we do not meet the object, the condition, the karma does not ripen and therefore we do not experience happiness and suffering. So we can see that happiness and sufferings are completely dependent on causes and conditions. Therefore, it is very important for you to reflect on causes and their results.

We need to think of **substantial causes** and their **conditions**. Let's take a flower as an example. For us to have a flower we have to start by planting a seed; but just by doing this, there is no guarantee that a flower will arise. The flower will depend on whether the conditions are good for it to grow. When we recite the **Heart Sutra**, we do the practice of dispelling hindrances, clapping our hands while we say: "may inner and outer hindrances be dispelled, be pacified, may they be completely pacified". What we are doing here is actually trying to dispel hindrances for these hindrances not to arise.

If a flower meets all the right causes and conditions, it will be able to grow well. If the causes and conditions degenerate, the growth of the flower will be affected. In this way, we see that this flower does not exist inherently, in an intrinsic manner, as it completely depends on causes and conditions. This is a clear sign that phenomena do not exist independently. In particular, **our own happiness and suffering also depend on causes and conditions**.

Our happiness and suffering have the characteristics that are mentioned in Nagarjuna's opening stanza:

- they depend on causes and conditions,
- they arise and cease,

- they become annihilated or continue to exist,
- they come and go,
- they are seen as a whole, they are seen as different and so on.

All these features depend on causes and conditions – there is no happiness or suffering existing inherently.

We take care of our flower, watering it etc, so that it grows well. But it could also be that when we notice that this flower is not growing well, we will just leave it alone so that it will wither. In the same way, in relation to our suffering and happiness, we could decide to do something about the situation, applying methods so that our suffering can be reduced, and eventually be eliminated. But we could also decide not to do anything about it, in which case the suffering will grow more and more until it becomes unbearable. In the same way with happiness: we could do something to keep it and make it grow, or then to just do nothing about it so that it will quickly disappear and turn into suffering...

## SECOND SESSION

It is very important for us to know the **meaning of dependent arising**. Indeed, it can be understood on two levels:

- ❖ The conventional, and
- ❖ The ultimate level

Firstly, we must understand what dependent arising means on the **conventional level**, because without understanding this, there is no way we will understand it on an ultimate level.

Dependent arising can be understood from the point of view of:

1. *Causes and conditions*
2. *Dependence on parts*
3. *Imputation by conception (this being the subtlest level, which can be difficult to understand in the beginning)*

Let us start with the first. **Conventionalities** are of many types; in fact, there are infinite varieties of phenomena, such as forms, odours tastes etc, which are all examples of conventionalities.

We can divide **conventionalities** into:

1. **Compounded and un-compounded phenomena:**
  - a. **Compounded** phenomena are impermanent phenomena,
  - b. and **un-compounded** phenomena are things like space, time, etc.
2. Another way is to think of conventionalities is to think of the **three-fold division** of:



- a. **consciousness**,
  - b. **form (or matter)**,
  - c. and those which are **neither matter nor consciousness**.
3. We can also think of compounded phenomena in terms of **causes and effects**:
- a. **Causes** can be divided into direct causes and cooperative conditions,
  - b. and **effects** can be direct or indirect.

**Regardless of what kind of phenomena there are, whether conventional or ultimate, they all fall under the umbrella of dependent arising.** There is nothing that exists that is not dependent arising – if something existed that is not dependent arising, it would have to exist ultimately, and that is simply not possible.

- ❖ Even the “I”, the self, “my” aggregates, “my” body, “my” consciousness, “my” country, “my” planet Earth and so on are all phenomena which are dependent arisings.
- ❖ “I” am posited on “my body”, “my consciousness”, “my aggregates”.
- ❖ There is no “I” that exists independently, without depending on the aggregates, the body and the consciousness.
- ❖ Every time we say, “my body”, “my mind”, “my country” we have to depend on the idea of “I”.
- ❖ Without this, we cannot talk about “my” things.
- ❖ We can see that all these ideas are in fact inter-dependent.

All the circumstances we find ourselves in, our physical and mental well-being, our companions, our financial situation – they all depend on the “I”. We have various states of happiness and suffering, which all depend on the “I”. There is no situation independent of this I. We need to analyse the nature of this “I” – is it something independent, permanent, unitary, self-sufficient, independent of causes and conditions? What is the nature of “I”? You really need to **investigate** all this.

This “I” does not exist inherently, intrinsically, so that

- if we try to find it amongst the aggregates, we will not be able to find it;
- we will not be able to find this “I” among phenomena that are related to body and mind,
- and we cannot find it amongst phenomena that are unrelated to body and mind.
- However, the “I” still exists conventionally, and because of this, we are able to posit suffering and happiness related to this “I”.

There are people that claim that it would be possible to find this “I” if we look for it. Indeed, amongst some philosophical systems, they posit a permanent, independent “I”. Some people might think that even though it is not possible to find an “I” just now, you can find it in the past or in the future. Amongst non-buddhist tenets, there are various assertions regarding to whether or not this “I” can be found, but in our buddhist system, this “I” will never be found.

**Even though we cannot find this "I", still it exists conventionally.** The Buddha said very clearly that there is nothing that is not dependent arising. According to our own system, the **Middle Way Consequence School (Prasangika)**, all phenomena are posited merely by name, because, when we look for these objects we will not find them. We can look for them in the four seasons, in the past, present and future, but we will not be able to find them. Although these objects cannot be found in an ultimate way, still, they exist conventionally: we still experience happiness and suffering.

- When we create **virtuous karma**, we experience **happiness**,
- and when we create **non-virtuous karma**, we experience **suffering**.

This is something we can know from our own experience!

If we look for the "I", we will not be able to find it. **The Buddha taught this kind of non-finding to be the absence of inherent existence.** The "I" does not exist inherently; it is empty of inherent existence. If this is the case, how do we establish the existence of consciousness, of our body, of our experience of the various objects? We have to reflect on selflessness – from the point of view of persons and of phenomena.

The classical example that we find in the texts is the **mottled rope** lying in the corner of a dark-ish room. Say, at 6 am when the sun hasn't quite arisen yet. You enter this room, and see this mottled rope, and because of the poor light, you may mistake it for a snake. Once this thought arises in your mind, terror and fear will arise too. But if you have the chance to go and have a closer look, you will realize it is only a coiled rope. Of course if you analyse the parts of this rope, you will understand that there is nothing in them that is a snake. Once you realize this rope is not a snake, you will immediately overcome the fear of it being a snake.

*In the same way, we have this conception of "I", and we experience fear as a consequence of grasping at this "I". Once we realize there is no such "I", we will realize that the fear arising from the grasping at this self will also disappear...*

In this example of the mottled rope mistaken as being a snake, we can understand that if we had not thought that the rope was a snake, we would also not have experienced the fear that it is a snake. Of course within this rope, there is nothing that is snake; there is not even the slightest bit of snake anywhere amongst the parts of this rope. When we realize there is no snake, the fear disappears.

**We have to use the same pattern to realize selflessness and emptiness:** we have to make effort to realize selflessness of persons and phenomena. If we are able to familiarize with this thought of selflessness, we will become free from the thought that thinks there is an inherent existent "I" among the body and mind. **Once we are free from this conception that grasps at this "I", we will not experience any afflictions that are based on this kind of disturbing thought, on this self grasping.** Once we are free from karma, we can free ourselves from samsara and attain liberation. We need to make effort to see that this "I" is not self-existent, that it is merely imputed on the aggregates, and in this way, come to realize emptiness.

For example, **His Holiness the Dalai Lama** in his recent teachings in Hamburg (Germany) said that at the age of 16, he had a great interest in emptiness, and thus started contemplating on it. We can also do this on a daily basis, and remind ourselves that everything we see, hear etc are all falsities. Of course, we might not be able to do it with the same quality that His Holiness does, but nevertheless we have many opportunities and options to remind ourselves of emptiness!

*There is nothing that is not dependent arising; there is nothing that is not empty of inherent existence.*

*We should bear this in mind as much as possible, because if we carry this kind of awareness with us, our mind will not be disturbed, and afflictions will not arise.*

*If afflictions do not arise, we will not create karma and in this way we will attain liberation.*

During those teachings, His Holiness gave instructions on the Buddha Jewel – on the dharmakaya - as well as on the Dharma Jewel.

What is this **dharmakaya** that has been mentioned here several times? It really is the (buddha) body that is empty of inherent existence, the body of emptiness of inherent existence. In the practice of highest yoga tantra, we talk about bringing death, the intermediate state and rebirth into the three buddha kayas.

The first practice is **bringing death into the path of the truth body**. How do we do this? We need to reflect, to contemplate on **emptiness**, and this is the **real essence of practice of deity yoga**. If you think that deity yoga involves just recitation of mantras, in the absence of understanding of emptiness, then you are completely wrong!

*So by remembering that the "I" and the aggregates are empty of inherent existence, we will be able to become free from our afflictions, because the objects that normally give rise to them will no longer be able to disturb our minds. Then we will no longer be creating karma, and instead, make progress on the path. Then, the practices of the other perfections, generosity, ethics, patience, effort and so on will follow easily.*

In reality, scientists undertake very detailed research on phenomena. They try to solve many kinds of problems using analysis and research of outer phenomena. However, they don't have much knowledge regarding the relationship of objects and consciousness, as found in buddhism. So even though they may be very well informed relating matters about outer phenomena, they are really quite ignorant when it comes to understanding the mind!

Many of us have been involved with buddhism for a long time, so that we need to be well-informed regarding the buddhist tenets. **Buddhist tenets** can be divided into Hinayana and Mahayana tenets, and we need to learn the different views and systems these tenets have. Especially in terms of the **Mahayana tenets**, we need to know that there are three:

1. The **Chittamatra** (Mind Only School)
2. The **Svatantrika** (Middle Way Autonomy School)
3. The **Prasangika** (Middle Way Consequence School)

There is a progression amongst the tenets in terms of subtlety, and we need to know what faults there are with the lower tenets, analysing their views carefully, and come to realize the good qualities of the higher tenets.

***If the view is coarse, it will be able to dispel coarse afflictions, and if the view is subtle, it will be able to dispel the coarse afflictions.***

*If our view is of the coarse type, we will be able to dispel the coarse afflictions with it, but we will only be able to dispel the subtler afflictions once we come to the view of the higher tenets.*

We should not have blind faith with respect to the teachings of the Buddha. We all know he said that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence. But if someone asks us, “how do you know Buddha said this”? You might answer, “Because Nagarjuna said that”. If you are asked, “how do you know Nagarjuna said that?” and you say, “Because Lama Tsong Khapa said it”. How do you know that? “Because my teacher said so”. If you can only base your faith on what you have heard and other people have said, this will not take you very far. Instead, we ourselves have to analyse and discriminate these various teachings in a correct way.

Based on what our Lama has said, we can understand what Lama Tsong Khapa has said, and based on what he said, we can understand what Nagarjuna has said, and based on that, what Buddha has said. But we need to develop more than just blind faith in their words: we need to develop the faith of conviction, where we know for ourselves the meaning of all they have said.

Therefore, we really have to try our best to learn, hear and study about emptiness, studying the many books that are available on this subject. We have to make effort, apply our determination to really understand the meaning of what emptiness is all about. We have to do this for ourselves; we need to study emptiness and dependent arising. **We need to know that dependent arising is the meaning of emptiness, and that emptiness is dependent arising.** If we don't know that, there is no way of getting rid of our disturbing emotions, and without this, there is no way to attain liberation from suffering.

You might think: “I can rely on my deity, my yidam, my Guru...” But without making effort to understand the **meaning of emptiness** - never mind eliminating your afflictions, you will not even be able to reduce them! We must remember what the Buddha said: “**you are your own protector!**”

Lama Tsong Khapa, when he was young, studied the dharma very extensively, from masters of the various traditions, Kagyu, Nyingma, Sakya and so on. He was able to perceive Manjushri directly, on account of his relationship with this deity over many past lives. Manjushri advised him to study the texts of Nagarjuna and his spiritual sons, and that by engaging in study and practices of purification and accumulation of merits he would eventually be able to realize emptiness. Lama Tsong Khapa did this, so that eventually his obscurations were greatly purified. One night, in a dream, he saw various Indian masters such as Aryadeva, Buddhapalita etc having a discussion. At one point, Buddhapalita placed a commentary on Lama Tsong Khapa's head, telling him to take good care of it. When Lama Tsong Khapa woke up

from this dream, he read this text and by doing this, gained insight into emptiness, achieving a direct realization. You can see from this account that Lama Tsong Khapa had to make great effort to realize emptiness, gathering a great many causes and conditions for this to happen. Without all this, there was no way this realization would have happened...

It would be very beneficial for you to come together for discussion, if you can. In the monasteries, there is no need to organize any discussion groups. Monks there think about the dharma all the time, and as soon as people get together, they spontaneously start a discussion. If this could also happen to you, it would be great! If two people start discussing, others might join and then you would have a big group discussing. If you could do this, it would be wonderful!

For example, you can think of the causes of something. You could name an object, then think of its causes and conditions. Immediately, this would provoke a discussion! It is very important for you to ask questions, questions that are based on reality, on fact, not on some kind of mystical experiences that you might have seen in your dreams, etc... questions based on fact!

Dedication

## **DAY 2 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014**

We need to free ourselves from cyclic existence. What is the method to do this? We need to understand the reality of cyclic existence. What are the causes for cyclic existence? These are the true origins of suffering. In order to abandon them, we need to actualize true paths in our continuum. Without generating true paths, there is no way to become free from cyclic existence.

The next question is: how do we generate true paths in our continuum? For this, we need to understand emptiness, which was taught by the Buddha, because the realization of emptiness is what will actually free us from samsara. The Buddha explained the view of emptiness in his Perfection of Wisdom sutras, which can be found in the Kangyur (the translated words of the Buddha) and the Tengyur (the translated treatises). By understanding his teachings, we will be able to properly identify the dharmakaya, the truth body of the Buddha. Without using the view of emptiness, no other path can lead us to the identification of the dharmakaya. So, in order to attain the resultant dharmakaya (resultant truth body), we definitely need to seek the correct view of emptiness.

If you look at the Mahayana sutras, you will see that they begin their expositions with a discussion of emptiness, although there are exceptions, such as, the Abhisamayalamkara. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for us to find the view of emptiness, for without it, there is no way to find the dharmakaya. If we don't understand what the dharmakaya is, we will not know what we are seeking, and we will not find the elements of the path.

The question now is: how do we seek this view of emptiness? The Buddha taught the wheel of dharma of the four noble truths in the very beginning of his teachings. It is by understanding these that we will be able to begin our path to liberation, because by understanding the four noble truths, we will understand the causes of cyclic existence and we will also understand how we can liberate ourselves from cyclic existence.

If we fail to understand the four noble truths properly, we will not be able to identify properly what the buddhadharma is. In that case, we will go for refuge to statues, instead of the Buddha; or maybe we go for refuge in dharma texts, instead of going for refuge to the dharma, or then we go for refuge to some monks instead of going for refuge to the (true) Sangha.

If you take the Buddha Jewel to be the buddha images, such as thankas and statues, the Dharma Jewel to be the texts, and the Sangha Jewel to be the monks and nuns, then, how are these objects going to be able to liberate you from cyclic existence? We need to identify the objects of refuge properly, and this needs to be done by understanding what the four noble truths are. So, from the outset, we need to make effort to understand what the four noble truths are.

We need to verify whether or not the **four noble truths** accord with reality, and to do this, we need to apply reasoning that establish their validity by using logic. The four noble truths begin by explaining true sufferings, and true origins, which are the causes of sufferings. These are points we can check from our own experience.

*In order for us to understand the four noble truths thoroughly, we need to be persistent in our efforts, because it is not easy to understand them in a detailed way.*

*For instance, in order to understand true origins, we need to understand the afflictions, and how karma gives rise to its results. Without studying these, we will not understand the four noble truths properly, so that it is crucial to study and understand them well. We need to realize that these are not just things the Buddha said, but rather, things that accord with reality!*

For true paths and true cessations, without doing study of what they are, there is no way we will be able to understand them properly. If you do not properly understand them, you have not properly identified what the actual refuge object is. The actual refuge is the Dharma Jewel, which is the true paths and the true cessations – if you fail to understand what these are, you will not have understood your refuge at all! If you have not identified the actual Buddhadharma, true paths and true cessations, and you claim to be practising dharma, practising highest yoga tantra, practising deity yoga, then you are only engaging in a big confusion!

All the teachings the Buddha gave were taught for the sake of living beings, there were no teachings of the Buddha that were not taught to benefit us.

If you look at how His Holiness the Dalai Lama teaches in the world, you can see that he frequently introduces topics such as the tenet systems - the philosophical systems, he explains emptiness and so on. He elucidates topics that accord with reality, and his doing so has great purpose, because He is like the second Buddha. Among the many teachings He gives, not so many are tantric teachings, so that you

should understand the significance of all his teachings on tenets and philosophy, and why he is giving those.

So what are true cessations? You should understand that “cessation” is an excellent quality - a **result** that is a separation. Separation refers to separation from the afflictions and their latencies. Through understanding cessations, you will understand what these afflictions and their latencies are. If we assert that there are true cessations that are a separation from the afflictions and their latencies by means of applying antidotes, the next question we need to ask ourselves is whether it is really possible for us to be separated from the afflictions and latencies. Is it possible to apply antidotes in order to achieve this? If it is possible, how do we generate these antidotes within our continuum? In our teachings, there is mention of impermanence, suffering, emptiness... how do we generate these realizations in our continuum?

When we talk about these aspects of impermanence, suffering, selflessness and emptiness, we should try to prove them. We should check whether or not things are impermanent, whether suffering is reality, based on our own experiences. We should seek to see if it is possible for something to exist as a permanent, partless and independent self? We should check if there is an inherently existent self. If we check properly, we will find that these are reality, and they are not just something made up by Buddha.

The above are wisdoms that counteract the misconceptions that hold:

- Things that are impermanent to be permanent;
- Suffering to be happiness;
- Things that are empty as not being empty;
- And things that are selfless as being a self.

If we apply analysis, we will 100% understand that these aspects apply to reality. Through this process we will come to the conclusion that it is definitely possible to become separated from the afflictions that are in our continuum.

In order for us to understand that the attainment of true cessations is possible, we need to know that it is possible for us to become free from afflictions, to become separated from these stains, and that the antidote exists. In order to understand these points, we need to understand the Middle Way View, as explained by Nagarjuna and his spiritual sons. There are many excellent qualities we can develop such as love, compassion, bodhicitta, etc; but they do not have the ability to counteract the conception of inherent existence. If we want to counteract the grasping at true existence and inherent existence we need to have the antidote of the wisdom realizing emptiness, and in order to be able to generate this wisdom, we definitely need to understand the works of Nagarjuna and his spiritual sons.

Although all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, we grasp to phenomena as existing inherently. As is said in the Heart Sutra (in the perfection of wisdom sutras): “form is emptiness, emptiness is form; form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form”. By grasping at phenomena as being inherently

existent, we give rise to all kinds of afflictions and disturbing emotions, so these need to be understood very well.

We need to think about emptiness, and we need to try to understand how our mind reacts to this idea of emptiness. We need to reflect on the afflictions, and how they cause us to get into trouble, and how they ruin us. As much as possible, we need to undertake this kind of contemplation in a serious manner, so that eventually we come to the conviction that it is possible to become free from them. This is not something that will be achieved by reciting mantras and doing superficial practice. The method for attaining the realization of emptiness, of attaining liberation, has been taught by the Buddha and clarified by Nagarjuna and his sons, also by the great Indian pandits. Within the Gelugpa tradition, Lama Tsong Khapa has composed 18 volumes of writings in which he explains the method of attaining liberation and realizing emptiness.

To obtain a good understanding of how to become free from our afflictions and obtain liberation, we need to study these very well. It is only by studying well and coming to an accurate understanding that we will actualize the true refuge. We will then be able to understand what the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha Jewels really are, so that when we go for refuge, we go for a pure refuge!

Some of us may claim to be buddhists, saying that we have been buddhists for 10 or 20 years, but if asked “what is the Buddha Jewel” we would point at some statues or say that the Buddha is somewhere in space. Such ignorance only delays any accomplishments...

It is crucial for us to understand the view of emptiness, and attain a realization of it. We may engage in the practice of bodhicitta, and in that way become a kind-hearted person. But bodhicitta alone will not be able to eliminate our afflictions. Like Lama Tsong Khapa said: “without the view of emptiness, we will not be able to cut the view of self, we will not understand what cyclic existence is and we will not be able to attain liberation from it.”

*In the cultivation of compassion, we generate the wish for living beings to become free from suffering and its causes. But in order for us to achieve such a state, we need to have wisdom; we need to understand that the main cause of suffering is ignorance. In order to eliminate this ignorance, we need to realize emptiness and selflessness. So even though we may have compassion, without this wisdom, we will not be able to actualize the goal of compassion, which is the separation from suffering and its causes.*

Even though it is very difficult to realize emptiness – there is no doubt about that – we need to keep trying, because without effort, there will be no way to make any progress.

Sometimes we have a lot of confused thoughts in our mind, superficial thoughts in our mind. These are the results of our ignorance and confusion. Sometimes people go into a house and say, “oh, I can feel some kind of bad energy...”. Such kinds of conceptualizations are disturbing emotions which will cause us to feel doubts and so on. Really, if we can become free from our ignorance and afflictions, we will be able



to attain liberation easily. Sometimes, when we meet a person, and we say “oh, this person has a bad vibe, a bad energy...” we generate a lot of bad thoughts and conceptions.

There are people who refuse to interact with human beings, only having as friends their own pets! They refuse to interact with other humans. There are people who have difficulty in communicating and interacting with other people; they feel they cannot share their feelings with others, and so spend their time with animals. This is due to their superstitious thoughts. In reality, if we do not have these kinds of conceptualizations regarding others, it should in fact be easier to interact with other people rather than with animals! Indeed, some people are very close minded and have this very narrow perspective, having difficulty in interacting with others.

*There are various kinds of objects, some of them manifest and others hidden, which we don't always understand. But once we are able to understand **emptiness**, we will be able to overcome all our bad thoughts and confused conceptualizations regarding these objects.*

“Emptiness” is a word we use very often, but what does it actually mean? Modern scientists have done detailed investigations regarding the outer world, all the way to the atomic level, but they are not able to point at some kind of essential existence. How do things exist, do they exist or not? This we need to investigate using our intelligence, and we must not just jump to some conclusion based on what the Buddha or Nagarjuna have said.

We have to check the appearances that we perceive. Sometimes, things appear in a certain way but when we analyse those appearances, we find that we are not able to verify them. We cannot find the object that we see in our appearances. Sometimes it is the case that what appears to our mind is simply an emanation, a projection of our minds. If we don't analyse and we simply accept appearances, we can end up in trouble, and this causes us a lot of complications!

For example, when we are angry at a certain person, we perceive a very negative appearance of this person. The person may be a good person, but appears to us as being completely bad. We project our own conceptualization on this person, forgetting that this person is just like us, not wanting suffering and wanting happiness. In other words, we confuse reality.

In our daily lives, when anger, competitiveness or jealousy appears in our minds, we should catch these negative emotions as soon as possible and try to apply methods to counteract them. We may have a very dear friend, who has many good qualities, but when we get angry at him or her, this person appears completely negative and repulsive to us. We will be unable to see any good qualities in that person, but this only happens because of our own negative conceptions!

When we find such disturbing emotions arising in our mind, we should catch ourselves and try to see how our mind holds this object, in a way that does not accord with reality. We have to understand how our conception of true existence grasps at a certain person in a negative way. This occasion actually provides us with

an opportunity to analyse the nature of reality, and counteract this conception of true existence we have.

Sometimes when we find ourselves in a situation where we have difficulty getting along with someone else, such that we feel so miserable that we just want to go away, and not see and interact this person. In such circumstances, we should try to think of the fact that this other person also wants happiness and does not want suffering, and that maybe this difficulty in communication is just accidental, and that this person is not doing this on purpose. If we then think of emptiness of the situation, this will help us to become more peaceful, and enable us to attain freedom from any mental disturbances.

Whenever we experience a problem, we should try to think of emptiness. If we do, we will find it helps us reduce our mental tension, and provide some relief. When we experience problems but don't apply any antidotes, we end up feeling discouraged, depressed, anti-social, and could even start resorting to smoking and drinking to escape this situation. If we have a small problem which we do nothing about, this can escalate into a much bigger problem.

Although it is difficult to realize emptiness, we have to keep trying. Emptiness is a hidden phenomenon, of which there are two types:

- i. Slightly hidden phenomena
- ii. Very hidden phenomena

Emptiness is of the first type, a slightly hidden phenomenon; and to realize it you don't need to rely on the scriptures and words of the Buddha. Instead, you will need to apply reasonings in order to understand and realize it.

From the very beginning, it is very important for you to understand that emptiness doesn't mean utter non-existence. We are not saying that phenomena are empty of existence; rather, we are saying that phenomena do not exist **inherently**. In fact, they **do exist conventionally**.

We need to differentiate between:

- (a) something not existing conventionally and
- (b) something not existing conventionally in an inherent way.

When we talk about emptiness of inherent existence, we are saying that things do not exist in the way they appear, they do not have the nature of existing in the way they appear. Take for example this table in front of me. In reality, it is composed of molecules and undergoes constant transformation. However, when we look at it, it does not appear in that way; rather it appears as existing in a very concrete, vivid manner. It appears the same table that existed last year or even several years ago, even though in reality it is undergoing constant change – but we don't see that at all!

When we say that phenomena are empty of inherent existence, in no way are we saying they do not exist. Rather, we are saying that they are empty of existing in the way they appear: things appear in a certain way, but do not exist in that way. In fact,

phenomena do exist: all the people in this hall exist, this building exists, I exist. All this does exist!

As I have said before, emptiness is a hidden phenomenon – specifically, a slightly hidden phenomenon. This is not to be established by scripture; rather, in order to prove emptiness, we need to apply logic by studying the writings of Nagarjuna and his spiritual sons. When we try to prove emptiness, we have to check and see if it really exists the way it is described by the Buddha and the great masters. In that way, we need to prove emptiness by using logic and reasoning

The Buddha’s teachings can be divided into two categories:

1. The definitive meaning sutras
2. The interpretable meaning sutras.

## SECOND SESSION

Therefore, **to seek emptiness means to seek reality**. Without understanding emptiness, there is no way to free ourselves from cyclic existence. If we wish to attain liberation, there is no way other than seeking the understanding of emptiness. In order to find emptiness, we should rely on the definitive meaning sutras of the Buddha, because by relying on the interpretable meaning sutras we will not find the meaning of emptiness.

From among the three turnings of the wheel of dharma of the Buddha, we will not be able to rely on the first. This is where the Buddha taught the four noble truths, so that this first wheel consists mainly of the Hinayana teachings, where emptiness is not really taught. In the last wheel, particularly in the “**Sutra Unravelling the Thought**” the Buddha mainly taught for the sake of the Chittamatra (Mind-Only) disciples. Therefore, we will not be able to find emptiness based on the teachings of the third wheel of dharma.

*We need to rely upon the second wheel of dharma, the wheel known as “**characterless wheel of dharma**”. By relying on that one, we will be able to find the meaning of emptiness.*

Within this wheel, we find the “**Tathagatagarbha Essence Sutra**”, which we can rely on. Therefore, the definitive meaning sutras mainly reveal ultimate truths – emptiness; whereas the interpretable meaning sutras mainly reveal conventional truths. By relying on the latter sutras, we will not be able to realize emptiness.

How do we differentiate between the definitive and interpretable meaning sutras? This cannot be determined solely based on sutra authority; rather it has to be done on the basis of logic. In **Lama Tsong Khapa’s “Essence of Eloquence”** (“**Differentiating between Interpretable and Definitive Meaning Sutras**”) he says that we need to rely on reasoning to tell the two phenomena apart. If there is a statement that contradicts reasoning, that should not be taken as valid.

If a person claims that phenomena are not dependent arisings, that things do not come from causes and conditions, and that phenomena are inherently existent - then such a person cannot be taken as a valid person, because his assertions contradict reasoning and logic.

- In the **first** turning of the wheel of dharma, the Buddha taught that phenomena **do exist** inherently;
- in the **second** turning of the wheel of dharma, he taught that phenomena **do not exist** inherently;
- and in the **third** turning of the wheel, the Buddha taught that: **other powered phenomena** and **thoroughly established phenomena do exist** inherently; and that **imputational factors do not exist** by their own character.

What was the Buddha thinking when he made these statements? The teachings given by the Buddha were given on the basis of the trainees, in dependence on their faculties and dispositions.

1. For instance, in the **first turning of the wheel of dharma**, he taught *for the sake of the disciples of the Vaibhasika and Sautrantika schools, who are considered of lower faculties, and for them, the Buddha taught that phenomena exist inherently*. If the Buddha had taught them that phenomena do not exist inherently, this would cause a lot of fear, as these teachings would be taken to mean that phenomena do not exist at all. This would lead to wrong views such as the non-existence of karma, etc.
2. In the **second turning of the wheel of dharma**, the Buddha taught that phenomena **do not** exist inherently.
3. **In the third or final wheel of dharma**, it was neither appropriate for the disciples to be taught that phenomena do exist inherently, nor that they do not exist inherently. So the Buddha taught according to their dispositions, saying that certain phenomena exist inherently, and others not:
  - i. He explained that in the **second** turning of the wheel, when he said that phenomena do not exist inherently, he meant the imputational factors; and that
  - ii. In the **first** turning of the wheel, when he taught that phenomena are inherently existent, he was talking about the two, namely: (a) other powered phenomena; and (b) thoroughly established phenomena.

Therefore, the **Buddha is a valid being**. He is described as someone who has become a valid being, because of his having propounded dependent arising and emptiness. .Therefore, his teachings on dependent arising and emptiness cannot be damaged by any kind of reasoning. The Buddha is said to have become a valid being, so that we can understand that this depends on causes and conditions – one cannot become anything without causes and conditions. Was the Buddha always a valid being, from the beginning? The answer is no. In the beginning, the Buddha was just like us.

The Buddha, through familiarizing his mind with the aspects of impermanence, suffering, emptiness and selflessness was able to understand reality. He realized how sufferings arise from the afflictions, and how all beings suffer in cyclic existence under the influence of ignorance. Thus, he generated unbearable compassion and bodhicitta for the sake of all beings, and on the basis of all this, he became a valid being. After this, the Buddha benefited sentient beings out of his love, compassion and wisdom, as he directly knew how all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, revealing this reality to living beings in a flawless, faultless manner. Therefore, he is called a **valid teacher**.

*The Buddha attained the nature body and the wisdom-truth bodies. He revealed to beings the four noble truths in the way that he himself had realized them, in a faultless manner. In that way, he is known as the **Tathagata** – someone who has **gone-to-thusness**. Therefore, we can understand that wisdom is very important!*

The happiness we experience in our lives, the confusion due to conceptualizations and confused thoughts, are all due to our lack of wisdom and our ignorance. As followers of the Buddha, we are very fortunate to have access to teachings that have thoroughly been analysed by the Buddha.

However, the Buddha said that we should not just take his teachings on the basis of faith, but rather only after having verified that his teachings are free from contradictions:

1. When we hear teachings on **manifest phenomena**, we need to make sure that they do not contradict **direct valid perception**;
2. When we hear teachings on **slightly hidden phenomena**, we need to make sure that they do not contradict **inferential valid cognition**; and that
3. When we hear teachings on **very hidden phenomena**, we must ensure that the earlier and later presentations of these teachings do not contradict each other.

It is only on the basis of having verified that the scriptures are free from contradictions that we should accept them. It is really amazing that in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, where we see great advancement of science, that we still have access to Buddha's teachings and that many people are interested in them. The presentation of consciousness and phenomena was taught by the Buddha 2,500 years ago. His teachings are still able to dispel close-mindedness and confusion nowadays.

So, we have access to the treatises of the great pandits such as Nagarjuna, who composed the praise to Shakyamuni Buddha, because he was amazed about his teachings on dependent arising. On the basis of dependent arising, the Buddha was able to claim that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence.

All buddhist schools accept dependent arising, and non-buddhist schools do not. Therefore, on the basis of the acceptance or not of dependent arising, we can differentiate between buddhist and non-buddhist schools. By asserting that the self is a dependent arising, we will arrive at the conclusion that the self has to be impermanent. But those who claim that the self is not a dependent arising, have to conclude that the self is in fact permanent.

All of you have heard many buddhist teachings before. The difference between buddhists and non-buddhists in terms of view is that the buddhists accept an impermanent self; but non-buddhists such as Christians, the Indian schools of Samkyas, Charvakas and so on do not accept this.

We have these statements proclaiming that all compounded phenomena are impermanent, and all phenomena are empty. But the non-buddhist schools do not accept that all phenomena are empty. Non-buddhist schools in their final analysis do not accept dependent arising, so that we find, instead, the concepts of a creator, or a general principle. Amongst the buddhist schools, on the other hand, we find dependent arising, and mere imputation by conception. Because the non-buddhist schools do not accept dependent arising, they end up positing a permanent self.

The lower buddhist schools, the Vaibhasika and Sautrantika accept that dependent arising refers to arising depending on causes and conditions. The higher schools – the Middle Way schools - say that dependent arising is not limited to arising in dependence on causes and conditions. These posit dependent arising as arising on mutual reliance; therefore, **dependent arising refers to relying on parts.**

To give an example – we are able to posit “the other side” by depending on the idea of “this side”. So we can see that this side and that side are really relative ideas. “Now” is posited in reliance of the past and the future. We can talk about a future relative to the idea of a present; we can talk about the present relative to the idea of a past. In this way, we can see that they are all relative, mutually relying ideas.

To give another example: we can talk about a tall person in relation of a person that is shorter. This tallness is not something absolute. When we compare a tall man to a tree, we will see that in fact that man is not so tall (if we say that he is as tall as a tree, then we will know that this tree is in fact not so tall at all).

*These ideas are relative, and when we compare something big with something bigger, then it actually becomes small...*

Let us examine professions, such as a carpenter or an architect or a translator. How does someone become a carpenter, working with wood and making furniture? As a result of the work a person engages in, that person is labelled “a carpenter”. But we cannot say that wood is the cause of a carpenter. Rather a carpenter is imputed on the work he engages in. We cannot say that translation is the cause for the translator, but his or her translation work causes the person to be labelled “a translator”. It is through dependence on causes and conditions, through imputation, that we can talk about the idea of dependent arising.

We can understand that all phenomena are dependent arisings, and that they all depend on mutual reliance. In fact, there is nothing that does not depend on mutual reliance. Another example: let’s say there is a business man. By depending on his clients, he becomes rich. But we should not say that his clients are the causes for the business man; rather through mutual reliance, through the transactions with his clients, this man becomes a business man. There is no business man that can function without relying on other factors, without mutual reliance.

Similarly, nations also rely upon one another to improve and develop. It is not possible for a nation to improve without mutual reliance, without depending on other nations. It is not possible for a nation to exist in a way that does not depend on others; it has to rely upon other nations or countries for it to develop and grow.

We depend on the four elements for our existence. Although we are said to rely on the four elements, it is not the case that we are the results of the four elements. However, if any one of these four were missing, we would not be able to exist.

The Indian master **Nagarjuna** highly praised the Buddha on account of his having taught dependent arising in an unprecedented way; therefore, he composed praise to the Buddha for this. In the opening stanza of **Nagarjuna's "Treatise to the Middle Way"** he praises the Buddha for being the best of teachers due to the teaching of dependent arising. In his opening stanza he says that even though phenomena have production and cessation, coming and going, oneness or difference, these features do not exist inherently. If we do assert inherent existence then it would not be possible for these things to exist.

When we examine production, we will understand that this is a process that depends on causes and conditions. There is no production from self, in that if there were production of self, then the cause would have to exist at the time of the effect. For instance, the seed would not exist at the time of the result of the seed. There is not production from others (in an inherent way), from both self and others (in an inherent way), in the absence of cause. Things are produced by depending on causes and conditions.

Emptiness can be analysed in various ways. From the point of view of entity, we can analyse whether things exist as one or many. If things were to exist inherently, they should be one or many. You can also analyse using the point of view of cause: if there is the production from an inherent cause, there should be four possible modes, and you should analyse what these modes are and whether or not they are feasible.

**The reasoning for dependent arising is the best way to prove that phenomena do not exist inherently.**

By understanding that things arise in dependence on each other, we understand that they do not exist in an inherent manner. In addition, causes give concordant results: we do not expect results that are not concordant with their causes. For example, if we plant rice, we will not expect wheat to grow.

By doing much reflection on dependent arising, you will be able to understand the nature of the appearances around you. If things were dependent arising, they should appear in a certain manner. By reflecting on dependent arising again and again, you will be able to realize that appearances are false. In that way, you should be able to proceed closer and closer to emptiness. This is why we say that **conventional appearances are like a staircase to ultimate truth**. In order for emptiness - ultimate truths - to arise in your mind, you must first have conventional truth, falsities, arising in your mind.

If there is a person with bad motivation, trying to deceive someone else, this bad person may pretend to be very friendly and kind. If this situation is not examined, one will be deceived. However, if one is very perceptive, one checks the situation – is this person really that kind and sincere – then one will understand that this person is a trickster, that this person has a bad motivation, and in that way, reality will become clear.

By contemplating dependent arising again and again, one will be able to arrive at very subtle levels of dependent arising. This will induce a realization of emptiness, and by realizing emptiness, one will see that the afflictions are really falsities. For example, our own body is also a dependent arising, depending on many causes and conditions: food, drink, medicines, and so on. Many causes and conditions need to aggregate to enable sustenance of our bodies.

We might think, “I have a very healthy body, I’m doing very well and I don’t need anything or anybody else to keep healthy”. But this is a mistaken way of thinking because it is not the case that you don’t depend on anything. Take the example of electricity: you use electricity, but just imagine all the people that have worked so that you are able to use electricity now. We can see that there is nobody that can exist without depending on other people.

If you look at your whole life, then you will see that all the time you have depended on others. You were born in a hospital, or with the help of others. So many conditions have aggregated for you to become what you are now: you were given the opportunity to study, to be healthy. You may have developed pride thinking you are so special, all by yourself, but this is absolutely not so. Also, as we get older, we will depend more on others. By knowing dependent arising, we will be mindful of the kindness of others. Since our existence depends on the kindness of others, it is not right for us to harm others.

Since we are able to exist by the kindness of others, we should not be unkind to them. If you think about karma and results, you will understand that reliance on others is not limited to this life alone. Without simply taking the Buddha words as an authority, we can apply reasoning to understand the teachings on dependent arising. Through such a process we can increase our wisdom, love and compassion.

Let us stop here for today.

DEDICATION

## **DAY 3 – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014**

### **MORNING SESSION**

In Dharmakirti’s **Pramanavartika** (“**Commentary to Valid Cognition**”) he states that: “without repudiating its object you cannot abandon it”. The “it” here refers to the conception of self; therefore, “without repudiating the conception of self, you cannot



abandon the conception of self". Therefore, we need to realize the non-existence of the conceived object of the self, the self grasping. If we don't realize that such an object does not exist, there is no way we can abandon the grasping of self.

The way to repudiate such a conceived object of self is to generate the wisdom realizing emptiness of a self. No other mind has the power to repudiate this object of self; without this there is no way to eliminate ignorance, which is the root, and without eliminating the root, there is no way to eliminate the branches, such as cited in the twelve links of dependent origination.

In a similar way Lama Tsong Khapa says, "Even though you may familiarize yourself with renunciation and bodhicitta, if you don't develop the wisdom realizing emptiness, you will not be able to cut the root of cyclic existence".

In order to realize emptiness, we first need to identify the object of negation. This can be labelled in different ways: self of persons, self of phenomena, etc. **This is an object that needs to be negated through the use of a correct reason.** We can apply the **reason through the power of fact** to negate this object, which exists with respect to its object possessor, the consciousness holding it. In this way, we will be able to realize emptiness.

Ignorance holds to its object in an erroneous way. So the object of the mode of apprehension has to be negated using reasoning; and such a process of negation can also be described as:

- Negation of the object;
- Negation by way of the sign; or
- Negation of a non-existent

**While the object is to be negated by reasoning, the corresponding object-possessor, the consciousness, should be negated by means of a path.** This means, we should progress by developing the wisdom realizing emptiness, and in this way, we will be able to abandon the object-possessor in its various forms, namely, the intellectually acquired and innate forms of ignorance, of which there are 9 levels.

The object of negation is "inherently existent persons or phenomena", such as the aggregates of a person. If a person were to exist inherently, then it would not be merely imputed by conception, it would not be simply something designated by appearing to the mind. It would exist from its own side, and when looked for, it should become clearer and clearer, and eventually we should be able to pinpoint it. However, when we apply analysis using reasoning, we will find that the object disappears: in other words, that it doesn't exist.

In the very beginning, we need to cause the object of negation to appear to our mind, because without doing that we will not be able to negate it. As said by Shantideva "without contacting the object of negation, there is no way to realize its emptiness". This means, if we don't have an appearance of the object of negation, there is no way we can negate it, and in this way, there is no way we will realize it does not exist.

This is the cause with all phenomena, whether outer or inner. If you try to look for it, you will not be able to find it. All phenomena exist in a dependent way; they come to exist through mutual reliance. This analysis as performed by Nagarjuna in his **“Treatise to the Middle Way”** says, “The person is neither earth, not water, not fire, not space, not consciousness nor anything else. What person is there other than these?”

Chandrakirti has a similar reasoning in his **“Supplement to the Middle Way”**; “the person cannot be found among its parts, whether in the present or the future”. He uses the example of a chariot, which can be analysed in several ways. In the same way, the yogi also realizes that the person does not exist inherently.

We need to **check the nature of existence of this object of negation**: is it something that existed previously and goes out of existence when you realize its emptiness? It is definitely not the case that in the realization of emptiness we are positing something that was previously existent to become non-existent, because if something exists, there is no way we can deny its existence through reasoning. There is also no way that something non-existent can be posited as existent through reasoning.

***With the wisdom realizing emptiness, we are trying to negate the conceived object which is held by ignorance.***

By now we should understand that there are two modes of refutation:

We can refute something by reason  
We can refute something by path.

Let us take ignorance. It is a consciousness, and therefore it is existent, so it cannot be refuted by reasoning, because by using reasoning we can only refute something that is non-existent. Ignorance **exists** (as it is a consciousness) so it needs to be refuted by a **path**.

The object of negation we are trying to refute by reasoning here is: inherent existence, true existence, existence from the object’s own side without being posited by conception. It is not something merely posited by the mind, it is an object that is concrete in its own way. When we try to meditate on emptiness, we must try to understand what we are trying to meditate on – emptiness of what? We need to know the basis of that emptiness...

Many of you engage in some form of deity yoga, and you show great interest in practising this. But in order to practise deity yoga, you need to generate the deity from emptiness. If you have not yet identified the object of negation, there is no way you can understand emptiness. The main practice in tantra is deity yoga, which is generated from emptiness, and only then you can practise with the visualizations.

On top of this visualization of the deity out of emptiness, you also need to have the proper motivation for practising tantra. If you don’t have bodhicitta – the mind wishing for enlightenment for the sake of all beings - as your motivation, your

practise will not even be Mahayana dharma. Regardless of what kind of practise of tantra you are engaging in, whether it is the Six-Session Yoga or other practices, you need to ensure that from the outset you have correct refuge and bodhicitta motivation.

In addition, you need to strive to meditate on emptiness as much as possible. What does this mean? First of all you bring to mind the object of negation. This object that is to be negated by reasoning should be caused to appear in your mind; then you engage in the refutation of this object, bringing about the realization of emptiness. From the state of emptiness, you can then generate the deity. But if you don't have a correct idea of what emptiness is, you will not be able to generate the deity out of it.

You need to reflect on the fact that phenomena do not exist inherently, from their own side: you need to realize that phenomena are merely posited by imputation. They are merely imputed by conception, merely posited by the mind, they are existent only by mere name. This is the meaning of conventional existence. Instead, if we have something that is not merely imputed by conception, etc, then such a phenomenon would be inherently existent.

In the sutras the Buddha stated that phenomena are merely posited by conception, giving the example of how the various things in a beautiful garden are empty of inherent existence: no matter how attractive the beautiful flowers and trees appear, they are all merely imputed by conception.

Phenomena merely posited by conception do not exist from their own side; they do not have their own uncommon mode of subsistence. They exist only merely by name: this is the meaning of **existing conventionally**.

In the case of attachment, we superimpose an attractiveness that is actually not there, not existent. So the object may be pleasant, but when we generate attachment, we see the object as more attractive than it is. Due to this projection, this superimposition, we become attached to such an object, and as a result we go on to create negative karma.

In the example of the mottled rope that is mistaken as a snake, there is not the slightest bit of snake. If you try to find the snake within its parts, shape, colour, you will not be able to find any snake there. Even though there is no snake, our mind projects a snake onto this piece of rope, and as a result of this projection, fear arises in our mind.

This is the way in which afflictions arise in our minds. For instance, when we generate anger, we have a projection of the object as negative and horrible, and as a result, anger arises in our mind. We can even get really angry at objects such as computers, and project them as negative, as not functioning properly, turning our minds very negative. As a result, afflictions can arise very strongly in our minds.

*You should examine all instances of afflictions in our experiences, because if we do so, we will see clearly that these afflictions are really created by ourselves, fabricated by our own minds. These negative emotions are created by you!*

Even though things are merely posited by conception, merely imputed in name, they do not exist inherently, our mind holds to things as existing in a very concrete manner. So when we perceive the collection of shapes and colours, the collection of parts appears as not just being merely imputed by our conception. When we look for the object, we will not be able to find it; however, the object is held merely by our own mind.

In order to identify the object of negation, you should try to locate the self amongst your 5 aggregates. Try to look for the self in the collection of the 5 aggregates, in the continuum of the 5 aggregates. If you undertake such investigation, you will not be able to find the self. However, this does not mean that the self is utterly non-existent; it simply means that the truly existent, independent self, the self that is not just merely imputed by conception does not exist. The self does exist in a conventional way. You should try to understand, whenever you have this thought of “I”, of how it appears to your mind, and how you relate to it.

Especially when you are experiencing some kind of difficulty and problem, you should definitely check whether or not this imputed object actually exists. No matter how you look for this imputed object, this object of negation, you will not be able to find it. This is because this object of negation is due to a mistake in our own way of thinking, so we should examine in what way we have made a mistake. For this reason, it is very important to study the subject of **Lo-rig, “Minds and Awarenesses”**, so that you can understand the workings of the mind. Then you will be able to differentiate between conceptual and non-conceptual minds, between valid and non-valid minds, between mistaken and non-mistaken minds.

Since you are young and have the experience of studying, if you engage in the subject of Lorig, you will quickly be able to grasp this subject, as you are used to studying.

*All the complications and miseries that we experience in our lives are due to the wrong consciousnesses that we have in our continuum. We should examine in what way such consciousnesses are wrong, and think about how we can counteract them; how we can generate the wisdom that accords with reality, how we can generate valid cognitions that can oppose such wrong consciousnesses.*

The cultivation of wisdom is very important; because it is through this that we will be able to cultivate valid correct consciousnesses. We need to study – if we don’t, and simply recite some mantras, do retreats, etc; we will not be able to develop our wisdom. There is hardly any chance to give rise to wisdom through doing that, therefore it is important to engage in studies.

In order for us to understand that the self and the aggregates only exist conventionally, in mere name, and that is this reality, we need to engage in study. Without engaging in study, we will not be able to understand how these phenomena exist merely in name, merely conventionally.

Now I will look at the text by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and try to go through it as much as possible.

There are different sections:

1. Identifying the ultimate; then
2. Engaging in hearing, contemplation and meditation with respect to it.

As ordinary beings, we can engage in hearing about emptiness, in contemplating emptiness and we can engage in meditating on emptiness. These are said to be consciousnesses engaging in the ultimate. If the **object of negation were to exist**, then it would have to exist in the perspective of these consciousnesses engaging in hearing, contemplation and meditation. It would have to exist in the perspective of the valid cognizers engaging in the analysis of emptiness. It should exist in the perspective of such consciousnesses, but since it doesn't, this means the object of negation doesn't exist.

If the self were to exist in a truly existent manner, then we should be able to find it among the aggregates – as we are searching for it, it should become clearer and clearer until the point that we would be able to locate it. But this is not the case!

When we are talking about the wisdom realizing emptiness, we are talking about the consciousness that finds emptiness. It is not the case that when one realizes emptiness, one finds the imputed object. Rather, one realizes emptiness because one is not able to find the imputed object. When one looks amongst the aggregates, one finds that the self that appears in a certain way cannot be found. We realize that things do not exist in the way they appear, and this is the meaning of emptiness.

When things appear to us, they don't seem to merely be imputed by thought, merely posited by mind. They seem to be very concrete, vivid, solid and unchanging. This is exactly the object of negation. As is stated previously in the sutra citation, the flowers in the garden might be very pretty and attractive, but they don't exist objectively. When we engage in analysis, we will find that the attractiveness disappears – we will not even be able to find, to pinpoint the flower.

When you examine the flower from the point of view of its components – its shape, colour, etc – the flower will disappear from the perspective of your mind. This flower that previously appeared to exist in a very concrete manner now becomes non-existent. If you analyze the flower and ask yourself, "Is the shape the flower? Is the colour the flower? Are the petals of the flower the flower? Is the collection of petals the flower?" You will not be able to pinpoint what the flower is. Even if you look into the molecules and particles, you will not find the flower. If the flower existed in the way it appears, it should be established by reasoning and consciousness; however, as we don't find this flower anywhere, we say it is empty of inherent existence. Analysing in this way, we do not find the flower – what we find is the emptiness of the flower.

This emptiness we find is not one unrelated to the flower – rather, this emptiness we find is related to the flower. If we are able to find an emptiness that is unrelated to its basis, which is separated from any kind of conventionalities, then the emptiness we find would in fact be truly existent. In fact, this emptiness we found is also empty of true existence – it is also merely imputed by the mind, and it does not exist by way of its own mode of subsistence.

Do you understand what I am saying? Do you understand a little bit? (laughter)

The reality of this flower is such that when we look for the flower, we don't find it. Instead, we will find the emptiness of the flower. This emptiness is related to the flower, emptiness found by a reasoning consciousness analysing the ultimate. This is something that accords with reality, something that was propounded by Buddha and the Master Nagarjuna.

*When we look for the flower we do not find it; rather we find the emptiness of the flower. What do we find when we look for the emptiness of the flower? We don't find it, but we find the emptiness of the emptiness of the flower...*

The object of negation here is inherent existence. Although this expression is easy for us to say, it is not easy to identify it. Things appear to us in a certain way, but they do not exist in that way – they do not exist inherently. You have to understand clearly that when we say “emptiness” we should ask, “emptiness of what?” Emptiness does not refer to emptiness of conventional existence; rather it refers to emptiness of the object of negation. Don't think that emptiness means nothingness, otherwise, when you meditate on emptiness, you will just meditate on nothingness, which poses a very big danger of falling into nihilism!

*You must understand the very important concept of “**imputation through dependence**” or “**imputation through reliance**”. The words “dependence” or “reliance” mean that something cannot set itself up. If something is dependent on something else, it does not have the power to set itself up.*

In the expression of worship by Nagarjuna, he pays homage to the Buddha (see above). Here, Nagarjuna is not denying that cessation, arising, annihilation; permanence, coming and going, different and oneness exist conventionally. When he says that dependent arising is without permanence, coming and going, etc, substantially existent, he is describing it in the perspective of a consciousness realizing emptiness, where there is no annihilation and no permanence, no arising, etc. In a conventional perspective, these things exist – they depend on causes and conditions and do exist. Nagarjuna concludes in his expression of worship by saying that these things are “peaceful and free from fabrication”.

These are various kinds of phenomena of dependent arising, which exist conventionally and are mutually dependent. But in the perspective of an ultimate consciousness realizing emptiness, they do not exist – there they are pacified, freed from fabrication.

***In the perspective of a mind realizing emptiness, such conventionalities are negated; and it is said that such a state is a peaceful state, free from fabrication.***

So this kind of freedom from fabrication can be understood on two levels:

1. **A naturally pure level that is the nature body**– which refers to the fact that the self and the aggregates are empty of inherent existence. This refers to the

natureness body that is free from fabrication since beginningless time. Depending on this level, one is able to achieve another level, which is:

2. **The purity that is freedom from adventitious stains.** By having realized emptiness, one is able to *eliminate all afflictions, along with their stains.*

In his expression of worship, Nagarjuna offers this homage to the Buddha.

## SECOND SESSION

**Question:** Some schools accept inherent existence. Therefore,

1. What examples do they give?
2. How do they differentiate a phenomenon that exists inherently from one who does not?

**Geshe Jamphel:** Regarding examples given for inherent existence – indeed from the Madhyamika Svatantrika and below, the **Middle Way Autonomy School** and below, there is assertion of inherent existence. These schools accept that phenomena exist inherently. If we try to look for the “I” among the physical and mental aggregates, they say that the “I” can be found in the consciousness. From among the various sense and mental consciousness, it is the latter that is the “I” or self. Particularly, it is the illustrative mental consciousness that is the “I”.

If we look into the tenet systems in greater detail, we will find that the **Chittamatra** (Mind-Only school) divided into two:

1. Mind Only school **following reasoning**; and
2. Mind-Only school **following scripture**

The first ones follow the Svatantrika as seen above, saying that the mental consciousness is the illustration for the “I”, and the latter say that it is not merely the illustrative mental consciousness that is the “I”, the self. Rather, it has to be a phenomenon that is neither virtuous nor non- virtuous, and therefore they posit the mind basis-of-all – there the latencies are deposited, and this is what is posited as the “I” or self.

The Sautrantika School have an assertion similar to that of the Middle Way Autonomy School (the Svatantrika School). Among the non-buddhists we can mention the Christians. A sign that they assert inherent existence is the fact that they assert a creator god that is not established in dependence on other factors.

Therefore:

- i. In the Svatantrika School, they don’t see any contradiction between the self as a compounded phenomenon but also as inherently existent.
- ii. In the Mind-Only school there is the assertion of phenomena as inherently existent as well.

- iii. The Sautrantika have an assertion similar to that of the Mind-Only school – compounded phenomena are dependent arising whereas uncompounded phenomena are not dependent arising.
- iv. Amongst the Christians there is the assertion of an uncommon creator who exists independently and is not dependent arising.

In the Middle Way Autonomy School the example of illusions is given. An illusionist is able to cause a horse or elephant to appear to the spectators. The fact that they are able to perceive this horse or elephant is due to the combination of factors:

- a. Through the work of the magician on the twig or pebble, he is able to affect them in such a way that from their side they appear as a horse or elephant.
- b. However, this is not enough for the spectators to see them. They also have to be affected by the work of the magician, so that a mistaken consciousness can arise.

Through the combination of these two things, the spectators will be able to see these illusions. In the same way, the Svatantrika School says that (a) from one way things exist from their own side, and (a) from another way, there has to be a mistaken consciousness.

**Geshe Jamphel:** As for your second question, for those who accept inherent existence – how do they posit a phenomenon that exists inherently? They say that when we look for the phenomena, we actually find it. When we look for the table, this is an example of the inherently existent thing. For those who do not accept inherent existence, they say that you cannot find the table amongst its parts; you cannot find a table that is not imputed by conception nor a table that exists independently. The table is simply something imputed by conception. In this way, they refuse that things are inherent existence.

**Question:** Geshe-la says we should use reasoning to establish these things, but how could I trust my own reasoning since my mind is full of klesas and afflictions?

**Geshe Jamphel:** You have to rely on correct reasonings. You have to think of how something came into existence; you have to think of the various causes and conditions that caused something to arise. Some of us have this idea that we are just like that, this is the way I am, and that we cannot change. If I am bad tempered, I am bad tempered and this is the way we are. However, this is wrong thinking – we can change! Some of us may think we are lazy, but it is not correct to think that we are unable to change, or do something about it.

We have to remember dependent arising – things do not exist inherently, we do not exist inherently. This means that the problems we experience are temporary; the stains in our minds are adventitious, and there are antidotes to resolve our problems and transform. We are able to transform, we can find people to help us and get rid of our difficulties. If instead, things were inherent existence – if things existed in an independent way – this would mean we could do nothing to change them. We could not apply methods to solve our difficulties, we would not be able to transform.

Thanks to dependent arising we can change things for the better; we can apply antidotes and improve things. If things were not dependent arising and existed



inherently, there would be no way to change for the better. We would have no power to improve the situation.

There was this old lady who was about to die, and she felt very resentful towards God, saying “God has not been kind to me in my life. I will make some complaints and show my dissatisfaction...” I actually met people like that! This is a complication that could arise if you believe in an inherent existent God that could solve your problems; then, you could blame God for your misery...

**Question:** You said that emptiness depends on the flower, and the flower itself is an impermanent phenomenon. Is the emptiness of the flower also an impermanent phenomenon?

**Geshe Jamphel:** A flower is something impermanent. It arises, abides and will eventually cease. This is possible because of emptiness; a flower exists from the state of emptiness. However, emptiness is not something that depends on causes and conditions; it is not dependent on production and cessation. When the flower comes into existence, the emptiness of the flower also comes into existence and the same when the flower ceases to exist: its emptiness also stops existing. But we do not say that the emptiness of the flower has disintegrated, so it is not something that depends on causes and conditions. Is this OK?

**Student:** It is difficult...

**Geshe Jamphel:** When emptiness of an object comes into existence, it appears to the mind. But emptiness itself does not change, it does not transform. When we look at something that is impermanent, produced by causes and conditions, abides on account of that and also ceases on account of causes and conditions. Such a thing is not independent; it needs to rely on other causes and conditions. It is not self-supporting. Emptiness, on the other hand, is not like that. Emptiness, when it comes into existence, appears to the mind. We say that emptiness is permanent – we have to understand that as soon as it comes into existence, it appears to the mind, but is not subject to other causes and conditions.

**Question:** Does this mean that if someone has no karma, then emptiness does not exist for that person?

**Geshe Jamphel:** Yes, you are right. However, there is no person that has no karma...

**Student:** Except for the Buddha!

**Geshe Jamphel:** Even a Buddha has karma. For example, his body abides through causes and conditions.

**Question:** Geshe-la, you have talked about emptiness of emptiness of phenomena. This seems to be a crucial point of Nagarjuna’s explanation. Can you please give us more explanations on this?

**Geshe Jamphel:** When we look for something, we cannot find it. What we find instead is the emptiness of that thing. Apply the same examination to the emptiness of what you have just found. You don’t just find the thing when you look for it, and in the same way, you will not be able to find the object, in this case, emptiness.

**Question:** But if you cannot find the emptiness of that thing, then how do you find the emptiness of the emptiness of that thing?

**Translator:** Because you cannot find the emptiness, you find the emptiness of the emptiness – get it? (laughter)

**Geshe Jamphel:** You need to apply the wisdoms of hearing, contemplation and meditation. When you look for a certain basis, you do not find it – rather, you find the emptiness of that basis. Then, when you look for that, you will find the emptiness of the emptiness of that basis. Because things are dependent arisings, they do not exist independently, and thanks to that fact, things can change. If they existed inherently, they could not change. Then if I'm in a bad situation, there would be no hope... and that would be very depressing!

So some people receive instruction from their teachers, and they feel that this shouldn't be checked or analysed, since it is coming from their gurus. Even though they cannot do it, they feel they should be doing it, and thus feel discouraged and miserable. However, the Buddha encouraged us to check, to examine things using reasoning. The Buddha's advice can be implemented. The Buddha did not give instructions that are impossible for living beings to achieve. We should understand and appreciate this encouragement to analyse and check all the advice we are given.

*Regardless of what kind of difficulty we find ourselves in, we should know that there are methods to resolve it. Using a combination of skilful means and wisdom, we should be able to bring some kind of improvement to that situation.*

When we experience some kind of difficulty, we should remember it is a dependent arising - empty of inherent existence. We are not trying to deny the existence of the problem; what we are trying to say is that the problem is not independent, not something that could have set itself up. It depends on causes and conditions, and in this way, we should understand that there is hope!

**Question:** When the flower is created, the emptiness of the flower is created. This appears to the mind, but ignorance also appears to the mind...

**Geshe Jamphel:** This is not so. There is actually a difference in the time ignorance appears to the mind, and when the realization arises in the mind. There would be a second difference. When a flower first appears to the mind, check – how does inherent existence appear? You should examine how the mind holds to the flower as being inherently existent. There is this ignorance grasping at the flower as being inherently existent. By negating this, you cause the emptiness of inherent existence of the flower to appear. There is a difference in time between the manifestation of ignorance and when the emptiness of the flower appears.

**Question:** I heard just now that when the flower appears to the mind, the emptiness of the flower also appears to the mind...

**Geshe Jamphel:** No, emptiness does not appear to the mind that perceives flower. Emptiness can only appear to the mind that has engaged into hearing, contemplation and meditation... without that, emptiness does not appear to the mind. Do you understand?

**Student:** Yes, but...

**Geshe Jamphel:** We can say that things are created from causes and conditions, from their parts, and we can also say that things are created from the state of emptiness. There is a similar mode of creation...

**Question:** Does the emptiness of the flower appear directly to the mind of a Buddha?

**Geshe Jampel:** Yes, because a Buddha is completely free from all obscurations. Our minds are very obscured, which is not the case with the Buddha's mind. In Nagarjuna's expression of worship, he talks about this peacefulness that is free from fabrication. There are actually two kinds of pacification implied here:

1. The pacification in which there is an absence of inherent existence; and
2. The fact that the mind can become free from stains through the application of antidotes. The mind that has separated from all obscurations is the nature body of a Buddha.

Because phenomena are empty of inherent existence, the mind realizing emptiness is able to purify all stains and obscurations. This is why Nagarjuna says that dependent arising is without cessation or arising, etc; therefore, it is peaceful. In the perspective of the exalted wisdom realizing emptiness, only emptiness appears: no conventionalities such as cessation, production, and so on, exist. Therefore, we say that in the perspective of this exalted wisdom there is only pacification. But it is only through the pacification and elimination of all stains that one is able to attain freedom from cyclic existence. This is why, in his amazement, Nagarjuna offered this expression of worship, calling the Buddha a peerless teacher.

In order for us to become free from samsara, we need to become free from the twelve links of dependent origination. This depends on us realizing emptiness, because it is through this realization that we are able to remove ignorance that causes rebirth in cyclic existence. The Buddha was able to see that the realization of dependent arising was the best method for realizing emptiness, so out of his compassion, he taught it. Nagarjuna was amazed how the Buddha was able to teach dependent arising in this world, as nobody else had done that. Even though the Buddha has infinite qualities of body, speech and mind, still Nagarjuna praised him for his teaching on dependent arising.

In what way is this view of emptiness important? I want to explain this in the afternoon session...

## **Day 3 – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014**

### **AFTERNOON SESSION**

In the previous sessions we spoke about the importance of realizing emptiness. Why is it important to realize emptiness? We want to eliminate our afflictions, our negative emotions. To do this, there is no method other than the realization of emptiness. In order for us to eliminate our afflictions, we need to eliminate ignorance. By this we mainly refer to the conception of self, which is two: self of person and self of phenomena. Since ignorance is the root of samsara, we need to

eliminate this by means of the wisdom realizing emptiness. This ignorance holds the aggregates as being a self.

Ignorance obscures our mind, and prevents us from seeing what needs to be adopted and what needs to be discarded; it gives rise to afflictions and binds us to cyclic existence. With ignorance, we are confused regarding what we should practise and what should be abandoned, and as a result, we create a lot of projecting karma, which causes us to circle in samsara endlessly.

We are under the influence of karma and afflictions; we are under their power so we do not have freedom. Without choice, we are forced to experience undesirable sufferings in our lives. If we want to get rid of sufferings, we need to eliminate karma, and to eliminate karma, we need to get rid of afflictions, the principal of which is the afflictions. All the buddhist philosophical systems agree in that there is no creator god which is responsible for our misery. We say that our afflictions are the culprits for causing us to circle in samsara, so only by getting rid of them will we attain liberation from this endless circling.

All our confusion and sufferings can be traced to the root of ignorance. All the buddhist schools agree that ignorance is the root of samsara, because it causes us to create karma, and karma causes us to circle in cyclic existence. However, the schools don't completely agree what this ignorance actually is; therefore, we find differences in subtlety of (the various types of) ignorance they assert. This in turn causes the differences in subtlety of the afflictions they accept.

When His Holiness the Dalai Lama was in Hamburg recently, he spoke in detail about the subtlety of the afflictions. We find detailed presentations of the subtle afflictions in the texts of Nagarjuna and his spiritual sons. In the **Middle Way Consequence School (Prasangika)**, ignorance is posited as the conception of inherent existence. The ignorance that is the root of cyclic existence holds phenomena as inherently existent. Both the conception of persons and the conception of self of phenomena apprehend self and phenomena as inherently existent. This conception is not accepted in the lower school, where we don't find such a subtle presentation of the afflictions. There, the afflictions are presented as being concomitant with ignorance, which serves as the motivation for the various afflictions.

When we look at the **presentation of the four noble truths** according to the various tenet systems, we can also see differences in subtlety.

1. The four aspects of the first truth, **true sufferings**, has four subdivisions, as follows:
  - i. Impermanence
  - ii. Suffering
  - iii. Emptiness and
  - iv. Selflessness – this is posited by the Prasangika to be the absence of an inherently existent self. Such an assertion is not shared by the lower schools (the Svatantrika and below). Here you can see there is already a difference in subtlety.

2. When we move to the second truth, **true origins**, we also see differences in the assertions of the Prasangika and the lower schools. In all schools, it is asserted that ignorance is the origin of suffering; therefore, it is true origins. But the assertions of the Prasangika School are the subtlest, as they are able to posit a conception of self and phenomena that is grasping at true existence. This is not accepted by the lower Schools. As a result of this subtle presentation within the Prasangika, there is also a subtle presentation of the craving that causes ignorance and the circling in cyclic existence. Whether we are talking about true sufferings or true origins we see a subtle presentation in the Prasangika School that is not found in the other schools.
3. **True cessations** are a separation from true sufferings and true origins. Since the Prasangika has a subtler presentation of them, it follows that the Prasangika presentation of true cessations is also more subtle. This cessation has to be attained by the realization of emptiness - this is not something that can be posited by the lower schools.
4. When we look at **true paths**, there are also differences in subtlety. This is because the paths leading to cessations have to correspond to the separations you want to achieve. The true cessations posited by the lower schools are not accepted in the same way that true cessations are presented in the Prasangika. The main path posited by the Prasangika School is that of ultimate bodhicitta, which is a wisdom directly realizing emptiness. Neither is this kind of ultimate bodhicitta posited by the lower schools.

In this way, we can see that regarding the four noble truths they are presented in a subtler way in the Prasangika School. Even in the Hinayana we find a subtler presentation of them. On the Hinayana path of seeing according to the Prasangika School, one needs the realization of emptiness as the antidote for the object of abandonment, but such a presentation is not accepted by the lower schools.

We need to pacify the afflictions by realizing emptiness. The purpose of the Buddha coming to this Earth is so that we can realize emptiness. The Buddha taught that the meaning of dependent arising is emptiness, and that the meaning of emptiness is dependent arising. If our mind is unsubdued, we remain in samsara, and if our mind is subdued, we attain pacification.

We should be able to trace the root of suffering to ignorance, which is what causes the myriad forms of sufferings we experience. Our minds are unsubdued, but this is not something we voluntarily create. All of us have the innate natural wish of attaining happiness and being free from suffering. Although this is so, we are obscured in relation to the causes of happiness and suffering. Therefore, while we want happiness, we don't create the causes for this, and while we don't want suffering, we create the causes to experience it. Effortlessly, we keep creating causes for experiencing suffering.

To give you some examples: we feel it is hardship to study the dharma, so we give it up, but when it is time to have fun, to go for walks, etc, we happily do that, without any effort! Take the example of little children. To make them go to school and study

and learn, parents and teachers have to push them so hard; however, when it comes to playing they don't need any kind of pushing: they naturally engage in their play! If we want to go out for a coffee and a chat, three hours will pass very quickly, but if we have to sit down and study, we start to feel all kinds of aches and pains... While we wish for happiness, we are ignorant as to creating the causes for it, whereas we naturally keep creating the causes of suffering. For a person to turn out good a lot of effort has to be put in; for a person to turn out bad, not much effort is needed!

Our minds are unsubdued because we have ignorance; due to that, our minds are very disturbed. Check to see whether what I said is true or not; analyse and see if it is really the case that unsubdued minds are due to ignorance. It is true that by pacifying ignorance and the various afflictions we will come to attain peace. If we have joyous effort, we will be able to create virtue with delight; however, if we have laziness, we have the tendency of postponing virtue, eventually maybe even giving it up all together.

***If we have wisdom, then we will be able to spend our lives in a happy and meaningful way. Wisdom is an amazing quality! In order to have wisdom we need to make effort.***

**If we have ignorance, then it is easy for us to fall into the influence of laziness, attachment and distraction, even though we create so many problems for ourselves as human beings, and even though we are not even able to enjoy any happiness.**

Some people, although having a human life, are not able to make good use of it – they are very close minded, have a narrow perspective of their existence, they are always complaining and grumbling and therefore experience many difficulties in their lives. We have to try our best to generate wisdom. In order for us to do this, we need to study; therefore, study is very important.

Here in these teachings, we are trying to understand emptiness, which, as buddhists, is important to us. Therefore, we need to study well to understand what emptiness is. There are many forms of ignorance, the main one being the ignorance that doesn't know what needs to be practised and needs to be abandoned. But the most harmful type of ignorance is that which doesn't know the difference between what is reality and what is not.

There are many forms of ignorance, which means, not knowing. We may not know a certain person; we may not know how to cook; we may not know a certain place or a certain language. But these forms of ignorance may not necessarily harm us.

**It is the ignorance regarding what needs to be adopted and discarded, and the ignorance regarding reality, the meaning of emptiness, which prevent us from experiencing happiness in this as well as in future lives.**

**Ignorance** also includes:

1. Ignorance related to the nature of samsara;
2. Relating to the causes that give rise to samsara;
3. Ignorance about the mechanism of samsara;

4. And also, ignorance regarding the methods we can use to free ourselves from samsara.

Due to ignorance we generate afflictions, and due to afflictions, we create karma. Due to ignorance, we do not know about karma, when certain karmas are created; we do not know the duration of our karmas, and we do not know what karmas cause happiness and which ones cause suffering.

We need to learn how to identify this conception of self. Here, ignorance refers to ignorance regarding the knowledge of how things exist.

**What is this ignorance which is the conception of self? It is actually the opposite of the wisdom understanding reality; the opposite of the wisdom realizing selflessness.**

This conception of self is a conception that apprehends the self of persons and phenomena; it is the opposite of the wisdom realizing selflessness. This is the subtlest affliction – there is no subtler affliction; and the root of cyclic existence is no other than this. We have to know that the opposite of this conception of self is the exalted wisdom knowing that the self and the aggregates are empty of inherent existence.

The reasoning-exalted-wisdom that understands that the self and aggregates are empty of inherent existence directly opposes this conception of self. How do we generate this kind of wisdom realizing emptiness?

1. The best reasoning to prove emptiness is **dependent arising**.
2. Another line of reasoning we can use is called **freedom from one and many**. We say that phenomena do not exist inherently, because a phenomenon is not inherently one or inherently many. For example, a person. A person is not inherently one nor is a person inherently many; therefore, an inherently existent person does not exist.
3. Yet another line of reasoning we can employ here to realize that emptiness is **freedom from the production of any of the four extremes**. We can say that the person does not exist inherently because the person is not produced from the four extremes. Since the person and the aggregates are not produced from these four extremes, they do not exist inherently.
4. In addition we can also think that a phenomenon only arises through the aggregation of causes and conditions, without which it cannot be produced.

A phenomenon is not produced from any of the 4 extremes, because it not produced:

- i. Inherently from itself
- ii. Not from others
- iii. Not from both self and others
- iv. Not produced causelessly.

- i. If the person were **produced from itself**, then it would mean that the person and the aggregates were there before they were produced. Then it would not make sense that the person is again produced. If something were to be produced from itself, then it means that the effect would exist at the time of the cause, but this doesn't make any sense – that the effect be produced again. Not only does it not make sense that the effect doesn't exist at the time of the cause but it also needs to have a cause that is concordant with it.
- ii. A result is also not **produced from a cause that is inherently other**. If this were so, then the cause and the result would be utterly unrelated, as the result would not be concordant with its result. If you plant rice, you will not get wheat. Indeed, if it were possible to produce something from a cause that is unrelated to it, then anything could produce anything.
- iii. Since production from an inherently existent self and production of inherently existent others is not possible, then also **production from both inherently self and inherently existent others** is not possible.
- iv. The fourth extreme, **causeless production** is completely absurd and goes beyond logic.

If the causes are discordant, you are not going to get a concordant result.

Another reasoning you could apply is to **check whether the person is inherently one or inherently different from the aggregates**. If something were to exist, it would exist either:

- i. as one, or
- ii. as more than one

Anything else is not possible. When we consider some kind of compounded phenomenon that is produced, we understand that this is impermanent. It comes about through its concordant causes, and we can trace this phenomenon from a previous object; we can see the transitoriness of this object.

We need to examine well, trying to realize how the self and aggregates are empty of inherent existence. We need to apply the reasonings above and meditate on them. If we try to meditate on emptiness through this process, we will become closer and closer to emptiness. But if we don't try to do this, we will simply be meditating on an empty mind, which will not lead us anywhere!

Does a person exist inherently? If you say no, then what basis do you have; what reasonings can you give to prove that? We can check if a person were to exist inherently, then it has to be either inherently one with the aggregates, or inherently different from the aggregates. There is no third possibility. But the person cannot exist inherently, because it is neither inherently one nor inherently different from the aggregates.



Does the person depend inherently on the aggregates? The answer is: no. Does the person inherently possess or own the aggregates? The answer is also no. If a person were to exist inherently, does it exist inherently within the aggregates? Try to find this person: is it in a particular aggregate? is it the collection of aggregates? is it a particular shape in the aggregates, etc? By checking like this you will be able to eliminate all the possibilities and come to the conclusion that the person does not exist inherently.

The person cannot exist in a way that it is inherently one with the aggregates, inherently different from the aggregates; it cannot inherently possess the aggregates; it is not the collection or the shape or the continuum of the aggregates. Ignorance holds to these possibilities.

Look for the person; try to pin down what the person is. Look among the individual aggregates and look among the collection of the aggregates and so on. If you do a detailed analysis, you will find that you are not able to point to what this person really is.

The final mode of existence of the person is emptiness. Even though the person is empty of inherent existence we have the mistaken consciousness holding to the person as ultimately findable, apprehending the person as existing in a concrete vivid manner. But if you reflect properly, you will understand that the person is really empty of inherent existence. We need to know reality exactly as it is.

Without any kind of mistaken understanding and without any kind of deceptive factor, we need to understand reality exactly as it is. To know how things exist is to know the mode of phenomena, and that means, to know emptiness. We need to directly know how things exist; we need to know the final reality of phenomena exactly as they are.

*It is said that even a doubt tending towards the fact regarding how things really exist is so powerful that it can ruin cyclic existence.*

If we are able to understand emptiness correctly, we will be able to subdue our afflictions, and we will not newly generate them. Afflictions are things such as anger, pride, attachment, jealousy, and fear. What kind of profit would there be? Conversely, if you do not try to understand emptiness, you will really be making a very great loss. If we are able to understand emptiness and realize it then we are really able to take the essence of our perfect human rebirth. At that time, we will really attain freedom. This is because with the realization of emptiness, there will be no more trouble makers within us!

With the wisdom realizing emptiness, we are able to subdue the mind so that we can easily cultivate shamata (calm abiding). The reason we are not able to have calm abiding is because our minds are plagued by various kinds of afflictions and distractions. If we are able to prevent the trouble makers from distracting our mind, we will easily develop concentration. Therefore, you can see that emptiness is of crucial importance!

At the beginning of this class, we asked why it is important to realize emptiness, so based on the above explanation, you should be able to conclude that it is very important to realize emptiness. Not only is the realization of emptiness important in this life, it is also very important for our future lives. Then we will not come under the influence of afflictions, and we will not be creating karma. This is why the wisdom realizing emptiness is said to be a very powerful antidote!

*We may engage in the practice of Vajrasattva purification, reciting hundreds of thousands of mantras. However, meditation on emptiness is far more powerful in terms of purifying our negativities. This is because the realization of emptiness is the antidotes of the afflictions. Vajrasattva doesn't have the power to eliminate your afflictions – but the realization of emptiness does!*

**Lama Tsong Khapa** explained the view of emptiness in five great texts, so this view of the Middle Way is of utmost importance – in fact, it is the essence of all Buddha's teachings! Also when you look at the **Six Collections of Reasonings** composed by **Nagarjuna**, they are all on emptiness. His praise to Buddha is based precisely on the Buddha's teachings on emptiness of inherent existence.

All conventional appearances are in the nature of falsities – there is not the slightest truth in them. They are not trustworthy and not dependable. There is no reason to generate afflictions regarding these conventional appearances. For instance, you may see something that looks very delicious on the table, such as some nice fruit. But once you realize it is actually made of plastic, your wish to eat it will disappear!

By knowing that the object is false, your desire to get involved in it will disappear. You may see something that looks like a beautiful flower, and reach out for it. But if you find out that it is made of plastic, your desire to have it will disappear!

As soon as you understand emptiness, you will understand conventionalities and falsities. So you will no longer get upset when someone else speaks harsh words towards you – you will see them as falsities. Therefore, it is said that the realization of emptiness will prevent the new generation of afflictions. It is said that even a doubt tending towards the fact regarding emptiness will shatter samsara.

Therefore, if we make effort to understand and realize emptiness, this is a cause of happiness. By doing this, we will be ridding ourselves from the troublemakers in our mind! Once you realize emptiness, there will be nobody to harm your mind... what happiness that will be! Therefore, we have discussed the benefits of realizing emptiness. If we realize emptiness, we will become free from problems, but if we don't, we will be stuck with problems.

We create karma out of ignorance, out of obscurations. We create karma out of attachment and the other afflictions, so if we are able to stop them, we will stop accumulating karma. So you should generate the thought wanting to train in the realization of emptiness. If someone does not realize emptiness, this person will come under the influence of false appearances – then this person will create karma, and circle in cyclic existence experiencing suffering.

If you understand this process, you will generate strong compassion for all those who have not yet realized emptiness. That is to say, the realization of emptiness is also a means for generating strong compassion. Along these ideas, we realize the extraordinariness of the teachings of emptiness – this is exactly why Nagarjuna was so amazed at Buddha for having taught emptiness! The Buddha taught the path of dependent arising and how this really is the meaning of emptiness.

We should make effort to study emptiness. If we spend time studying emptiness, this is time well spent – and in this way, there is some hope that we will extract the essence of our perfect human rebirth. We should analyse the nature of phenomena – how do things exist, is their nature emptiness? Do they exist inherently? Do they exist the way they appear? Are they falsities? If you spend time analysing these points, this will be time well-spent!

We find that we have this tendency to cling to things in the way they appear to us. Things appear to us in a very vivid, concrete, permanent manner, so we have to try to do something about our clinging to such appearances. Many of us are interested in purification practices. **Learning and meditating on emptiness is the supreme way to purify our negativities; there is no better purification than that.** If we have no understanding of emptiness at all; if we make no effort to study and learn about emptiness, we will remain under the influence of ignorance.

Now we have attained a perfect human rebirth endowed with all the excellent qualities; we have met the Buddha's teachings that are so complete, being a union of sutra and tantra. We also have the opportunity to study these teachings, so we need to study them, otherwise we will have wasted our perfect human rebirth.

Let's look at the text now. **What is the meaning of selflessness?** This refers to the absence of an inherently existent person; an independently existent person does not exist. Emptiness of inherent existence is the final reality; there is no higher phenomenon than emptiness, because emptiness is the reality in the final analysis.

When we are talking about emptiness, we are trying to **negate something**. What is it that we are trying to negate? As explained above, we are trying to negate inherent existence. Emptiness is the freedom from inherent existence; this kind of emptiness means that phenomena are like illusions; they are empty of inherent existence. To say that phenomena are like illusions is to say that they are falsities. They are like illusions because they are empty of true existence; they do not exist in the way they appear, so they are not objects in which we should place our trust and hope.

Therefore, the realization of emptiness has the power to enable us to see all appearances as being like illusions. We understand that anything that appears to us is a falsity. The realization of emptiness is able to block all opportunities for the arousal of afflictions. By the realization of emptiness, we are able to prevent the accumulation of karma; we are able to become free from cyclic existence.

*The mistaken states of mind we have, the states of disturbed mind we have, do not have a valid basis. These afflictions lack valid support; they arise adventitiously depending on conditions. Therefore, it is possible for us to become separated from them, and the means to achieve this is the wisdom realizing emptiness.*

In the practice of highest yoga tantra we meditate on bringing birth, intermediate state and death into the path of the three buddha bodies. In order for us to perform this practice properly, we need to have bodhicitta and the wisdom realizing emptiness. Through the combination of these factors, we will be able to cause the 80 indicative conceptions to subside. After them, the minds of white appearance, red increase and black near attainment will arise. Lastly, the mind of clear light will arise, in which only emptiness is seen. You must understand that this practice of bringing death, intermediate state and rebirth into the path has, as its basis, the wisdom realizing emptiness.

As we have spoken so much about emptiness, I have the hope that you will be dreaming about it tonight! (laughter). When you are dreaming, try to recognize that you are dreaming; try to see that there are false appearances, not corresponding to reality. After we wake up from a dream, apart from remembering what the objects in the dream appeared like, we will not be able to see or grasp at anything anymore.

If we reflect well on the reasons proving emptiness, we will eventually be able to generate the wisdom realizing emptiness. In that state there is only emptiness, just as when you wake up from a dream, you realize that nothing you have dreamed of exists anymore. And like this, you will realize that all appearances you have are also false...

## DAY 4 – 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014

### MORNING SESSION

**Question:** If you are trying to look for the object of refutation, this strong “I”, we need to try and bring it up. This can be done in situations of fear, etc. If we are supposed to have mindfulness of emptiness during the day, how do we identify the object of negation when we don’t have such strong emotions? How do we keep the object of refutation?

**Geshe Jampel:** In general, there are three modes of apprehension with respect to the object of negation. Lama Tsong Khapa explains them as follows:

1. There is apprehension of things as truly existent;
2. There is holding to things as not truly existent;
3. And there is neither holding to things as truly existent, nor holding to things as not truly existent.

Let’s illustrate these 3 modes using an example. Let’s say we go into a store and look at what is available for purchase. At the beginning when you look at a particular object, you may not have a particular wish to buy it. Your mind is neutral and there is no grasping at the object. However, after a while the object captures your attention and you decide to buy it. Then you have the sense that “this is mine”; once this is identified as being your possession, there will be grasping.

Then you reflect on the nature of the object: you reflect that it is impermanent, essenceless, lacking true existence and in the nature of falseness. In this way, you lessen your attachment to the object. By now you know that the object is not truly existent, and attachment is lessened. So:

1. First you held it as neither being truly existent, nor as not being truly existent;
2. Then, you held it as being truly existent; and finally
3. You realize that in fact it was never truly existent.

When you are holding to an object as being really excellent and wonderful, your attachment to the object grows; but once you remind yourself that in fact the object is not truly existent, your attachment will reduce.

The same with someone we meet. First, we think this person is so nice, so special, and we create a lot of attachment. Later on, we get into an argument with him/her and then we see this person as completely false and negative. When we encounter an object and get angry at it, it appears completely faulty from its own side – it seems there is an inherently negative object existing from its own side. On the contrary, when we have attachment towards an object, it appears very attractive and desirable, and this causes us to have strong grasping at true existence.

*If there is an object that we are not paying much attention to, then there **isn't** this strong apprehension of inherent existence (towards this object). However, when we start paying attention to the object, then the conception of inherent existence becomes stronger. You can understand all this from your own experience.*

If we see a very good car going along the road, we don't pay much attention to it. But if our friend bought a nice car, we feel jealous and think, "Oh, he now has this car." We can compare these two situations: that of seeing a nice car on the road, and seeing our friend in this nice car... This is because in the second place we have a stronger conception of inherent existence – we have this mode of holding to the object.

Question: in **His Holiness'** book "**The Middle Way**", four kinds of wisdoms are mentioned:

1. Great wisdom
2. Quick wisdom
3. Clear wisdom
4. Profound wisdom

Are these the first four of the seven wisdoms as mentioned in **Lama Tsong Khapa's Guru Yoga** (Ganden Lhagyema)?

**Geshe Jamphel:** Indeed these four kinds of wisdom are similar to, but not the same as, the first four of the seven wisdoms mentioned in the Guru Yoga practice. These four wisdoms are important in any kind of meditation practice we engage in. When we meditate we need to ensure we have elements of all four in our practice.

- For instance, when we try to meditate on an object, it is not sufficient that our mind abides with **stability** on the object;
- On top of stability, we also need **clarity regarding the object**;
- But that alone is still not sufficient. On top of that clarity, we also need to have a **clear mind** which is meditating on that object.
- So, there is clarity from the side of the object and clarity from the side of the mind.
- We also need quickness and profundity in the mind whilst meditating on this object.

If we don't have these four kinds of wisdom, our mind will be as if asleep; we will experience laxity and our mind will be overtaken by obscurations.

Let us start on the subject of identifying the object of negation, which is inherent existence, or independent existence. The absence of this is final reality and it is the emptiness we are trying to realize. **This emptiness is a mere separation from the object of negation.** We should understand that conventional phenomena exist in a dependent way – conventional phenomena arise in a dependent way; they have to rely on other factors for their existence. This means that phenomena do not exist through their own power. Dependent existence is something that merely negates independent existence.

**Conventional and ultimate truths are one entity and different isolates.  
They co-exist in this way.**

We say that the two truths are one entity and different (conceptual) isolates. It is definitely not the case that they are unrelated and completely separated. You should understand that conventionalities have the nature of falsities, being merely imputed by conception, posited in name, and their existence is one of mere negation of inherent existence, or independent existence. Here, we are not denying their conventional existence: subtle particles, molecules do exist, and through their accumulation we are able to get coarser matter and objects. If we deny conventional existence, these particles would not exist and would not be able to accumulate to form bigger objects,

So, phenomena are dependent arisings; they are mere imputations. Conventional and ultimate realities are not separated, they are one entity. For instance, take a **table**: it is impermanent; it is composed of substances that undergo momentary change. When we look at the impermanence of table, we should understand that the table and its impermanence are not separate – it is impossible to find a table that is not impermanent. **So we say that the table and its impermanence are one entity.**

Table is impermanent; it is a transient phenomenon. We have previous instances of table producing later instances of table; previous causes produce later results. A table is able to perform its functions and has the nature of dependence on causes and conditions. Even though there is a subtle transformation in the table, it is difficult for us to perceive it. However, if we analyse, we understand that this is the nature of the table. Therefore, the table and its impermanence are of one entity but different isolates. This refers to existing inseparably but having different names.

*In general, conventional appearances and ultimate truths exist inseparably. We cannot have conventional truths without the existence of ultimate truths, and vice-versa. Conventional appearances are dependent arisings, and as such, they have to be empty of inherent existence.*

**Therefore, we say that *the two truths are of one entity. They are inseparable but they are of different isolates (they have different names).***

The two truths are one entity and different isolates. Being one entity, they are not one; they are different isolates but not different entities. Let us take the easier example of the table and its impermanence, which are one entity and different isolates. However, they are not one and they are not different entities. Why is it that the table and its impermanence are not one?

1. If they were one, it would mean that when you see the table, you should also be able to see the impermanence of the table directly. But we are not able to see the subtle transformation that is the impermanence of the table.
2. The table and its impermanence are also not different entities, because if they were, then the table and its impermanence would be unrelated, something totally separate and unrelated. This means, we would not be able to realize the impermanence of the table, since they would be completely separate.

Now we apply a similar reasoning to understand how the two truths are one entity but different isolates. Let's take the example of the mind and the emptiness of the mind.

1. **If my mind and the emptiness of my mind were one**, I would not need to make effort to realize the emptiness of my mind because to realize emptiness, in reality, we need to engage in hearing, contemplation and meditation with a lot of effort. If the object and its emptiness were one, since we can realize the object very easily, we would not need to make effort to realize its emptiness. This is an absurd conclusion. So we say that the object and its emptiness are different isolates but one entity.
2. **If the emptiness of my mind and my mind were unrelated**, then realizing the emptiness of my mind would do nothing for me – because they would be separate, nothing to do with each other. In this case, there would be no point in engaging in practice to realize the emptiness of my mind.

*Conventional phenomena are empty of inherent existence but they appear to have inherent existence. We say that the way they appear and the way they exist do not agree – there is a discrepancy. Once we generate the wisdom realizing emptiness, we will be able to block the arisal of afflictions, as the realization of emptiness of inherent existence has the ability to prevent new afflictions from arising. **Therefore, we say that meditation on emptiness is the best kind of purification we can engage in to eliminate our negativities!***

The opposite of the wisdom realizing emptiness is the conception of self, of inherent existence – ignorance. Ignorance can be divided into two types,

1. The conception of self of persons

## 2. The conception of self of phenomena

What is the basis for dividing ignorance into these two types? It is because we have two kinds of objects: the utilizers and the objects of utilization.

1. If there is grasping with respect to **utilizers**, we call that the **conception of self of persons**;
2. and the graspings with respect to the **objects of utilization** are called the **conception of self of phenomena**.

**Afflictions** also arise with respect to the utilizer and the object of utilization; so, we can have the:

1. **Grasping at the self**, which is the conception of the **self of persons**; and
2. We can have attachment to the **aggregates**, which is the conception of the **self of phenomena**.

You should check whether or not the above descriptions accord with reality. When we generate attachment or aversion with respect to the utilizer and the objects of utilization, we should check whether they correspond to the conceptions above.

We can **further divide the conception of self** into:

1. The conception of self **holding to an “I”**
2. The conception of self **holding to “mine”**

We can also talk about a **conception of a self of person** regarding

1. Holding onto **one’s own** continuum
2. Holding to a self belonging to **others’** continua

As mentioned, when we sub-divide the conception of self of persons we can have the above divisions. These are the various types of conceptions of self of persons. If the object we observe is not the self of persons, but phenomena, then we have the conception of self of phenomena.

**Here, we are observing the objects of utilization rather than the utilizers.**

- We should know that the difference between these two conceptions lies in their **object of observation** rather than in their **mode of apprehension**, which is the same, namely: holding onto inherent existence.
- In addition, the conception of self of phenomena is said to be the **cause** for the conception of self of persons.
- However, in terms of **realization of selflessness** we **first** realize the selflessness of persons and **then** realize selflessness of phenomena.
- Both conceptions have the same mode of apprehension with respect to their objects.



Why do we say that the conception of the self of phenomena is the cause of the conception of self of persons? This is because, in order for a self to appear to our minds, first the aggregates have to appear to our mind. First, there is the grasping at the aggregates, which means that first phenomena need to arise, so that the person appears to the mind afterwards.

In order for the person “John” to appear to our mind, first his body aggregate needs to appear. It is independence on such appearance to our mind that the person “John” will appear. If the aggregates of John do not appear to our mind, we will not have the idea of “John”.

- ❖ Grasping at the aggregates as inherently existent is the conception of the self of phenomena,
- ❖ And in dependence on this conception of the self of phenomena, the conception of self of persons arises.
- ❖ In the case of the view of transitory collection, by relying on the appearance of one’s own aggregates to the mind, grasping at one’s self will arise.
- This is how the view of transitory collection is generated.

Conventional truths and ultimate truths are one entity and different isolates. Conventionalities are inter-dependent; therefore they do not exist inherently. In this way, you can understand that the emptiness of inherent existence is not to be found anywhere else. By depending on the parts - or the components - of conventional phenomena, we are able to establish the emptiness of inherent existence.

You should have understood by now that the two truths are one entity but not one, and different isolates, but not different. If they were one, there would be four absurd consequences, as found in the **Sutra Unravelling the Thought**. Same for if they were different. You can use the example of the table and its impermanence to check. **The table is not permanent; it is impermanent, and, the emptiness of permanence is not a quality that is found apart from the table.**

You need to identify the wisdom realizing emptiness and its opposite, its counterpart, ignorance. What opposes this wisdom is exactly this, ignorance. It is divided into two types, two conceptions, the conception of self of persons and the conception of self of phenomena – and these are further subdivided, as described above.

*These various types of conceptions of self that were described are not different in their mode of apprehension; they only differ regarding their objects of observation. Having said that, we must remember that in terms of the order of generation, the conception of self of phenomena is generated first, and the conception of self of persons is generated later. However, in terms of order of realization, it is the opposite – one first realizes the selflessness of persons, later, the selflessness of phenomena.*

Most of the **Middle Way Texts** teach the order of generation of the conceptions and the order of realization of selflessness as described here.

As I have said before, the order of generation of the two conceptions is due to the fact that in order for you to have a person appear to the mind, first that person’s

aggregates need to appear to your mind. Therefore, first the conception of self of phenomena arises, followed by the conception of self of persons.

**Chandrakirti** in his “**Supplement to the Middle Way**” says that first there is a grasping at the “I”, and then there is a grasping at the “mine”. In a particular verse, he talks about the generation of the various types of compassion.

We also need to check whether it is possible for a conception of the self of persons to be generated before the arising of the conception of the self of phenomena. You can debate about this.

We also need to identify clearly what the person is, and what the object of negation in relation to the person is. When we think of “I” what exactly is it that we are referring to? What is the “I” that we should be trying to pin down? We need to realize emptiness in order to do that! (laughter). We think “I”, “I”, “I” all the time; perhaps we use this idea of “I” without really understanding what it is! Perhaps the idea of “mine” is easier. We think of “my” head, “my” arm, “my” leg but the idea of the “I” is more difficult.

When we think that “that person is angry at “me”; that person dislikes “me”; that person is mistreating “me””. What is this me, this “I”? Check! We need to analyse. In his text, His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that the conception of self of phenomena is also the conception of true existence and in dependence on that, the conception of self of persons is generated.

In the case of the conception of the transitory collection, first the conception of “I” arises, then the conception of “mine” follows. On the basis of the conception of self of phenomena, the conception of self of persons arises. That is how the conception of the transitory collection arises. Ignorance holds onto true existence, and due to this mistake, all kinds of complications and problems arise. Ignorance hides the reality; it prevents us from seeing how things really exist. In dependence on that, we accumulate karma.

## SECOND SESSION

We need to understand what **ignorance** is – it is the first of the **twelve links of dependent origination**. In order to understand what ignorance is, we need to understand how it holds to the self of persons and the self of phenomena.

The self of persons and the self of phenomena do not exist. They have not existed since beginningless time and they do not exist now; they don’t even exist conventionally. It is also not the case that they have existed before, but due to the realization of emptiness, they have now ceased to exist.

Similarly, selflessness of persons and selflessness of phenomena have always existed. They have existed since beginningless time. It is not the case that at some point some phenomena existed inherently. All phenomena are empty of inherent existence since beginningless time.

The two kinds of self – self of persons and of phenomena – do not exist. However, beings in samsara hold them to exist. Therefore, it is very important for us to understand what we are trying to negate here because we have a conception of these selves, which are the causes of all suffering. It is the wrong consciousness which is the root of all afflictions and of cyclic existence. We need to understand how the object of negation is apprehended by the conception of self.

*The two types of selflessness have always existed. That is the nature of persons and phenomena. It is not something that becomes coarser or subtler at any point in time. Living beings do not know the reality of selflessness.*

*For that reason, the Buddha taught the 84,000 heaps of dharma – so that beings could realize selflessness.*

The Buddha said that by seeing reality we will become free. This means that by understanding the two kinds of selflessness, by knowing reality, we will be able to free ourselves from ignorance, from karma and from samsara. Sentient beings are obscured from seeing reality, from seeing the two kinds of selflessness. What kinds of conditions need to be present for this situation to be reversed?

Starting from ignorance, we generate afflictions. Under their influence, we accumulate karma and then experience sufferings. The main form of suffering is **pervasive compounded suffering**. We are afflicted by sufferings and those sufferings are under the control of karma; karma is under the control of afflictions and afflictions are under the control of ignorance. We circle in samsara; we are trapped in this cage, enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, and without choice, we undergo the three kinds of sufferings.

We all have the pervasive compounded suffering. This pervades all cyclic existence, and is compounded by karma and afflictions. In this way, we all experience this kind of suffering. **Under the influence of karma and afflictions we appropriate the contaminated aggregates, and powerlessly, circle in this suffering.** It is due to establishing karma that we have to experience these sufferings.

There are **two kinds of karma**:

1. Projecting
2. Actualizing

Due to these two types of karma, we are projected into cyclic existence, taking rebirth there and helplessly experience sufferings. In cyclic existence we have graspings and so on. The 12 links can take place either within two lifetimes, or three lifetimes.

How does **pervasive compounded suffering** arise? Is it something that arises based on a previous instance of consciousness? No. If we suppose that the pervasive compounded sufferings arises on previous instances of consciousness, what fault would there be? Pervasive compounded suffering is not something that arises in dependence on previous instances of consciousness, because if that were

the case, there would be no way to eliminate suffering as long as consciousness existed. It would also mean that arhats (foe-destroyers) as well as buddhas would have this pervasive compounded suffering.

In addition to pervasive compounded suffering, two other types of sufferings are:

1. Suffering of suffering, which includes manifest pain such as sickness and so on;
2. The suffering of change, which refers to contaminated happiness that is subject to change.

If these two were also sufferings that arose depending on previous instances of consciousness, then this would mean that we could never get rid of them. We would be constantly tormented by these two kinds of sufferings, but in reality, this is not the case. If these sufferings do not arise in dependence of consciousness, then how do they arise?

Indeed, they are not an integral part of consciousness – rather, they are produced with some kind of potential which exists with respect to consciousness. There are conditions which produce these sufferings in relation to consciousness; however, they are not part of consciousness. Sufferings do not come from consciousness itself, but they are produced by adventitious conditions which give rise to sufferings with respect to consciousness.

Our suffering experiences are caused by adventitious conditions; they do not exist in a natural way from beginningless time. For example, the mental happiness and unhappiness we experience as a result of the noise of the tractors working outside (right now here in Nalanda) is not something that has been there since beginningless time; it is a consequence of adventitious conditions.

The potential that can produce suffering within our continuum is not stable, it is adventitious, it depends on conditions. It is possible for us to cause these potentials to be de-activated; we can prevent suffering from arising. When we experience suffering, we usually say it is due to karma. If this is so, then how did we accumulate this karma?

- ❖ Suffering itself is not karma;
- ❖ It is not action;
- ❖ This action has been created previously.
- Suffering is the result of karma.
- ❖ Sometimes when we experience suffering, we say “this is karma”. This is a case of labelling the result with the name of the cause.

If we experience a headache today, the karma that caused it might have been created a long time ago; maybe 100 or 1000 years ago, or maybe even more than that. It is undeniable that the potential giving rise to the suffering in relation to that headache depends on our own mind. That karma was created a long time ago, but what we have at present is what is called the “**desintegratedness of karma**”.

We do not say that everything that exists is due to karma. This is not correct. To claim that everything is due to karma is not correct. We have to understand that when karma is created, when an action is performed, this leaves a latency. Due to adventitious conditions we create karma and perform actions. This latency is deposited with respect to the mind. But we cannot say that everything is karma.

Let's say there is a tree in front of us. Can we say that this tree is due to karma? It would be difficult to say that. However, we should think of the statement of **Vasubhandu's "Abhidharmakosha"** where he says, "All the worlds arise from karma". The accumulation of karma depends on our motivation, on our thinking. In particular, it is because of grasping at "I" and "mine" that we create karma.

We have had the innate conception of self since beginningless time. When the idea of "I" arises in our mind, it is as though this "I" is an owner, a boss. It owns the mind, so that we say, "my mind" my body", "my property" and so on. So it is as if the "I" appears to have some power over the aggregates and possessions. Because of this grasping onto the "I", we have the idea that "I own my body", "I own my mind", "I own my things, all my stuff". If we were to cut off our finger, and it were to lie on the table, we would have the thought "that finger is mine!"

Here we are not talking about some philosophical assertions; we really have these experiences. We really have the sense that "I" own the body and mind; we have this innate conception of "I". We have an identification with our body. We have an old photograph and point to that image, saying "that is me, that is me". We have such innate consciousnesses apprehending the "I".

An "I" that is findable among the body and mind really seems to exist. We have an innate consciousness that believes that there is a findable "I" among the aggregates. Innately. We hold to an "I" that exists apart from the body and mind and this is an innate consciousness that everyone has.

We have the idea that there is an "I" that definitely does not depend on the body and mind. Even little children have this kind of idea. The "I" appears to be different from the body and mind; there seems to be an owner that utilizes the body and mind. However, if we are talking about the assertion that the "I" and the aggregates are different entities, then it is an assertion of the lower tenets. This conception of the "I" and the aggregates being different entities is an acquired conception.

Some of us may have the belief that there is an "I" that came from previous lives; was born into this life, and will continue into future lives. There is an idea of a permanent partless and unitary self that will pass from the present to the future life. This kind of conception can be quite strong. Indeed, all non-Buddhists assert the existence of such a self. They use terminologies such as "the soul" etc. This conception of a permanent partless and unitary self comes from exposure to bad tenets, and as a consequence, one holds to such a conception.

The conception of a permanent partless and unitary self does not exist from beginningless time; it comes about through the exposure of certain philosophical systems. However, the conception of a self-existing person is an innate conception, which has existed since beginningless time. It is very important for us to meditate

on impermanence. We need to bear in mind that we are subject to transformation, instant by instant. Our lives are transitory. By being mindful of impermanence, we will be able to reduce our attachment to this life.

By **remembering impermanence**, we will not:

- Accumulate negativities;
- We will prepare for the future lives;
- We will accumulate good karma so we can have good experiences next life;
- We will not waste our time.

In relation to the reflection on impermanence, we should think of how our perfect human rebirth is the most excellent support for creating virtues. It is difficult to find and can easily be lost. Our freedoms and endowments will not last – death is certain, its time is uncertain and nothing will help us except our virtues. If we come under the influence of afflictions, this will only harm us.

By reflecting on impermanence, we will be able to achieve the purpose of this perfect human rebirth. We will come to understand that a permanent partless and unitary self does not exist:

- We are not permanent, we are impermanent;
- We are not partless, we are made of parts;
- We are not unitary, and we are not inherently existent.

We are not going to stay long in this life; at the very most, one hundred years or so. Death is certain, the time of death is uncertain and there are many conditions that contribute for our death. Foods such as pizza are bad for health – they contain a lot of fats and salts, which are delicious but contribute to our bad health. We should understand that we are impermanent, that things we do contribute to our early death. Things like coffee, tea and other delicious drinks can be bad for our health. On the other hand, pure water, which is tasteless and not so delicious, is great for us and our health! If you go to any patisserie, you will see all those wonderful pastries and cakes. But if you check, one by one, you will see that they are all bad for your health. (laughter)

*There are many conditions that contribute to death;  
the conditions that sustain life are very few...*

There are so many types of medicine, but they are all “yucky” in terms of taste. But in my opinion, they are conditions that sustain and support life. Of course, we utilize various means of transport such as cars, planes and trains. No matter how good they are, they are really all conditions for death!

There are many things that we find useful in our lives but which, at the time of death, will not be able to help us. This is because at the time of death, only virtue will help us! Therefore, we need to make effort not to come under the influence of the afflictions, but rather, to try to accumulate as much virtue as we can.

From among the actions of body, speech and mind, we mainly need to ensure that our mind doesn't come under the influence of attachment and aversion. It is

important for us to generate the motivation for wanting to benefit all living beings. No matter what kind of resources we have, what kind of experiences we have, we should generate the wish that these become the cause for the benefit of all living beings, all while we are free from afflictions such as anger and attachment.

*Recently, in Hamburg, His Holiness the Dalai Lama advised the monks and nuns to **generate the motivation of benefitting sentient beings.***

*We should think about dedicating our bodies and resources of all three times, for the benefit of all sentient beings.*

*If this is really our motivation, there is no chance to transgress our vows!*

**The conception of a permanent partless and unitary self is an intellectually acquired affliction.** Likewise, if we have the idea that there is an “I” that exists as a different entity from the aggregates – as though the “I” is the boss and the aggregates are the employees – this kind of conception is also **acquired**. It is not innate; these are conceptions that arise solely through exposure to philosophical systems. If we hold to the self as permanent, then we will waste our perfect human rebirth. We will get the idea that the negative karma created since beginningless time cannot be eliminated.

If on the other hand, we are mindful of impermanence and understand that our body will be left behind at the end of this life, and that after death, our consciousness will continue into a future life, we will develop important understandings:

- ❖ We will understand that all the karma we have created in the past will be with us, in the form of latencies;
- ❖ We will think of the happiness in future lives;
- ❖ We will think of our welfare in the future;
- ❖ We will even think of our goals of attaining renunciation, bodhicitta, loving compassion,
- ❖ and attaining buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

**All these good qualities will come about when we think of impermanence. By thinking of impermanence, we will be able to extract the essence of this perfect human rebirth.**

## **DAY 4 – 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014**

### **AFTERNOON SESSION**

Does anyone have any questions?

**Question:** Could Geshe-la explain what this disintegratedness of karma is? I have never understood this.

**Geshe Jamphel:** After karma has been accumulated, after an action has been performed, in the next instance it transforms into a kind of potential, which is called the disintegratedness of karma. This potential produces a second moment of this,

and so forth. Since beginningless time, we have created many disintegratednesses of karma. It is a kind of latency of karma. For example, if we have the seed of a tree: in the beginning we have a seed, but its entity will transform into a potential which will give rise to a tree. As the seed transforms, disintegrates, it transforms into the tree. You can think of it in terms of transformation.

In **Chandrakirti's** self-commentary to his "**Supplement to the Middle Way**" he talks about the assertion of the **Sautrantika** school, who assert that when compounded phenomena disintegrate, there is a permanent phenomenon that is an affirming negative. The Middle Way Consequence School (**Prasangika**) refutes this permanent phenomenon that arises from something that is compounded and disintegrates. They say that when this happens, the result cannot be something permanent.

Because the Middle Way Prasangika school asserts the existence of this disintegratedness, they are able to posit a very unique presentation of the three times that is unshared with the lower schools. Put simply, you can think of disintegratedness as a kind of momentary transformation: the potential of karma to issue forth a result. It is a latency deposited on the mind, which is able to yield the corresponding result.

**Question:** Geshe-la said that first we realize the selflessness of persons, then the selflessness of phenomena. What is the reason?

**Geshe Jamphel:** Selflessness of persons is easier to realize than the selflessness of phenomena because of the basis of designation. In order to identify what a person is, you need to understand that the person is imputed in dependence on the aggregates. Simply through the process of trying to identify what the person is, you have to understand dependent arising. However, when you try to identify phenomena such as the aggregates, they appear to the mind in a way that does not require you to understand the presentation of dependent arising, as is the case when identifying the person.

When we try to identify a person, we will need any of the five aggregates to first appear to the mind. In that way, we are able to understand that the person is in fact merely imputed on any of the five aggregates.

**Question:** The conventional truth is false and ultimate truth is valid. It was said they are not the same, so, can we say they are contradictory?

**Geshe Jamphel:** Yes, they are contradictory. The two truths are contradictory – they are mutually exclusive. You cannot posit something that is both a conventional and an ultimate truth. If we have two identical microphones, we have to say that they are mutually exclusive, even though they are of the same type. There is nothing that is both at the same time! Any two persons in this hall are contradictory. However, the fact that they are contradictory does not mean that they are quarrelling with each other! (laughter)

**Question:** But at the same time, we say that they are one entity and exist at the same time.

**Translator:** So you find that this is contradictory with being mutually exclusive?



**Geshe Jamphel:** Even though they are contradictory, they are related to each other. There are several kinds of relationships: causal relationships, etc. The two truths are not cause and effect, they are not different substances. They are one entity, which means if one does not exist, the other one does not exist. But they are not different entities, because they are one entity.

Regardless of what kind of phenomenon we consider, that phenomenon is necessarily one with its emptiness. There is nothing that is a different entity from its emptiness. Likewise, there is nothing that is a different entity from conventional truth. In fact, all phenomena are related to conventional truths and all phenomena are related to ultimate truth. **This is not a cause and effect relationship; rather it is the relationship of being one entity.** We are not saying that every single phenomenon is related to every single conventional or ultimate truth; we are just making a general statement here.

**Question:** My question is related to how ignorance, which is said to be the root of all phenomena, grasps at inherent existence. Ignorance has this effect to exaggerating qualities – so how does this happen?

**Geshe Jamphel:** Ignorance is a mistaken state of mind because it is mistaken with respect to how things really exist. It apprehends things to be independently existent, of setting themselves up, to be inherently existent. When this gives rise to attachment, there is an exaggeration of qualities that are actually not there. Attachment holds the object of desire as inherently existent. It sees the object as not having to rely on other factors and as existing in a solid, independent way. This involves superimposition and exaggeration of qualities that the object does not possess.

To give an example of something whose qualities have been grossly exaggerated: French champagne! It is just what it is, but because people think it is fantastic, it becomes very expensive... (laughter). People in my home town regard it as something extraordinary! The object of one's liking is held as inherently existent, then we project layers and layers of superimposition onto it, so that its qualities are greatly exaggerated.

In the case of anger, one sees the object as having many many faults. Again there is this process of projection. Even though the person speaks very nicely to you, you feel unhappy. When the person displays a pleasant expression, you take it as deception. These projections are created by one's own mind!

**Question:** I want to know what the **Sautrantika** and **Svatantrika Yogachara** find when they look at the inherent existence of non-associated compositional factors, such as the falling of a cup. What would they find when they look for the inherent existence of this?

**Geshe Jamphel:** The falling of a cup is not a non-associated compositional factor.

**Student:** What would it be?

**Translator:** It is something you can see, right?

**Geshe Jamphel:** It is a form. What is the meaning of inherent existence? It means that when you look for that object, you are able to find it. Whether in the Sautrantika or the Svatantrika, if you have something existing inherently, you should be able to find it when you look for it.

**Question:** Are there positive kinds of attachments? I see so many Tibetans, including teachers, being attached to His Holiness the Dalai Lama...

**Geshe Jamphel:** Not all desires are attachments. When you have attachment you are superimposing a non-existent quality onto the object. When we have faith towards His Holiness this doesn't mean that we are projecting qualities because he has in fact many excellent qualities – many more than we are even able to perceive! For example, we can seek enlightenment. That kind of seeking is not attachment. For example, we can say “I wish to eat”; “I desire to study” etc – these kinds of desires are not attachments. Attachment is a cause of suffering, and if a desire is not attachment, it is not a cause of suffering...

**Question:** Yesterday Geshe-la practised looking for the “I”. If it is combined with strong concentration, would that alone be sufficient for attaining liberation? If that is the case, then calm abiding seems to be a more difficult practice than special insight.

**Translator:** How do you get it? Why would that be?

**Student:** You look and try to find whether the “I” is the body, or the sensations, etc. This is not so difficult.

**Translator:** So you are saying that this practice is easy to do...

**Student:** Yes. I am saying that this method is easier than attaining real calm abiding.

**Geshe Jamphel** (replying to the original question): No, it is not sufficient. There are many other causes you need to gather. For example, you need to eat food! That is an essential factor... (laughter). You also have to study, to learn... if you want to attain liberation, first of all, you need to generate the wish seeking liberation, which is renunciation. Then you have to meditate on the aspects of the four noble truths such as impermanence, suffering, emptiness and selflessness. You have to think of the process of getting rid of ignorance. In brief, you need to train in ethics, concentration and wisdom in order to attain liberation. You need to accumulate good karma by means of these three, ethics, concentration and wisdom.

**Question:** it says that in the teachings that a god will see water as nectar, and a hungry ghost will see it as pus and blood. If I bake a cake, would a god see that as nectar?

**Geshe Jamphel:** There are different possibilities. If you make a delicious cake and put it in front of Tharchin, since he likes cakes, he will be very happy. However, I am very health-conscious, because I am fat, so I wouldn't really like it (laughter). In any case, this example of how we would see the cake is just a joke. The real answer is: it depends on karma. The god, the hungry ghost and the human being see water differently because they have different karmas. It depends on individual karma. Two persons may be at the same place; one of them may see the place as very beautiful and enjoyable and the other person will see the place as full of faults. I believe this is also due to the differences in karma of these people.

**Question:** Until now, since beginningless time, we've had ignorance in our minds and not much compassion. But in the end, we will be able to eliminate ignorance and develop compassion. What is the logical reasoning behind this?

**Geshe Jamphel:** We should think about the effects of ignorance. We understand that ignorance gives rise to afflictions, from which we create karma, and due to karma, we suffer. We do not wish to suffer; therefore, we view ignorance as an enemy. We want to eliminate it. If we really ask ourselves, why do we want to

eliminate ignorance, then there is no reason other than the wish to discard suffering. We also understand that all sentient beings want happiness and don't want suffering; therefore, we develop the wish that all sentient beings be free from suffering. Eventually, we are able to develop a very strong form of compassion, known as the exceptional thought or exceptional resolve.

If we think about the fact that living beings are tormented by so many types of sufferings, natural disasters, wars and other man-made difficulties, we will realize that their sufferings arise because they have ignorance; they do not realize emptiness. As a result of that we generate a very forceful compassion towards beings. I'm not sure that answers your question...

**Student:** It doesn't show why it is possible to eliminate ignorance...

**Geshe Jampel:** It is possible to eliminate ignorance totally because phenomena are empty of inherent existence. It is possible to develop compassion limitlessly because you can think of the suffering of sentient beings. So to generate compassion, you need to reflect on the way in which sentient beings are tormented by sufferings. It is possible to eliminate ignorance because ignorance is a mistaken state of mind which has no valid support. If you apply reasonings such as dependent arising you will be able to establish emptiness and you will realize that ignorance is a mistaken state of mind. Then you will also be able to eliminate this mistaken state of mind.

If you think about your own suffering, then you will eventually generate the thought of wanting to be free from suffering: that is the mind of renunciation. You then carry on thinking that all sentient beings are like me, not wanting suffering. With that you are able to understand that all sentient beings also wish to be free from suffering and you generate compassion for them, wishing them to be free from suffering. Nobody wants suffering. Where does suffering come from? It comes from karma and afflictions; therefore, in order to be free from suffering, you have to eliminate karma and afflictions.

*Once we understand that suffering comes from non-virtue, and happiness comes from virtue, we will naturally want to refrain from non-virtue and practise virtue. By reflecting on your own suffering you will have no basis for generating pride. Thinking of the suffering nature of yourself and others, you will have no reason to generate negative states of mind such as attachment, jealousy etc.*

Just imagine that there are some patients lying in bed in hospital. It doesn't make any sense for one of them to start getting angry or jealous towards the other fellow patients. Therefore, the contemplation on suffering is the basis for the generation of many excellent qualities. If you do not reflect on suffering, then there is no way for you to become free from suffering! It is said that the contemplation of suffering has eight benefits.

**Question:** The contemplation of emptiness can make bodhicitta arise strongly. Can it work the other way around, namely, can the contemplation on bodhicitta cause emptiness to arise?

**Geshe Jampel:** Yes. These realizations help each other to grow. It works both ways: as I have explained earlier, the realization of emptiness can induce bodhicitta.

The generation of bodhicitta can also enhance the understanding of emptiness. There are two ways of entering the bodhisattva path:

- 1 The mode of the **dull bodhisattvas**. Bodhisattvas of dull faculties are known as followers of faith, first training in love, compassion and bodhicitta, and realizing emptiness later on.
- 2 The mode of the **sharp bodhisattva**. Bodhisattvas of sharp faculties first train in emptiness, then later on generate compassion and bodhicitta.

It is not the case that the view of emptiness and bodhicitta are independent; in fact, they complement each other and help each other to develop. How does the generation of bodhicitta help the attainment of the realization of emptiness?

In the case of the dull faculty bodhisattvas, they first generate compassion towards the beings of all six realms, seeing how they are tormented by suffering. These bodhisattvas then develop the wish to protect them but realize that without attaining enlightenment they will not be able to do that; they will not have the ability to free sentient beings from suffering and place them in happiness. Having generated bodhicitta, they then aim to actualize the state of omniscience. But with bodhicitta alone, one will not be able to reach such a state. Upon investigation, one recognises that without the realization of emptiness, this will not be possible; so one trains in the view of emptiness in order to realize it.

**Question:** What is the relationship between **non-objectifying compassion** and the wisdom realizing emptiness?

**Geshe Jamphel:** *What we mean by non-objectifying compassion is a wisdom realizing emptiness conjoined with compassion. In non-objectifying compassion we have both, compassion and the non-objectifying part, which refers to the wisdom realizing emptiness.*

There are **three kinds of compassion**:

- 1 **Compassion observing mere sentient beings** – One observes sentient beings tormented by suffering and wishes them to be free from suffering;
- 2 **Compassion observing phenomena** – Here one observes impermanent sentient beings and develops a wish for them to be free from suffering conjoined with the realization that sentient beings are impermanent.
- 3 **Non-objectifying compassion** – This is the most profound compassion, which is conjoined with the realization that sentient beings are non-inherently existent. One realizes that the cause of their suffering and the causes of their continuing circling in samsara is ignorance. In this kind of compassion, one understands emptiness, and how to become free from ignorance and its causes. **This is a compassion that is conjoined with the realization of emptiness.**

On any account, it is crucial for you to think of the four noble truths as taught by the Buddha. If you do not generate strong renunciation, you will not be able to generate compassion, and without compassion, you will not be able to generate bodhicitta. By reflecting on the four noble truths, you will generate the wish to become free from

ignorance, to become free from cyclic existence. And without this wish, you will not be able to realize emptiness.

- *The first two of the four noble truths are true sufferings and true origins, which explain how we enter cyclic existence.*
- *The third and fourth noble truths are true cessations and true paths, which describe how we exit cyclic existence.*

We should understand that true sufferings come from true origins, and to understand such a mechanism we need to understand the twelve links of dependent origination.

The first of the twelve links of dependent origination is ignorance. All the teachings of the Buddha are a method for realizing emptiness. Why do we need to realize emptiness? Because we want to eliminate ignorance. Therefore, this emphasizes the importance of studying the dharma.

There are two types of meditation, placement and analytical. Between these two, the latter is more important. If we want to attain the state of enlightenment, we need to meditate on the 16 aspects of the four noble truths, which are:

**True sufferings:** *impermanence, suffering, emptiness and selflessness;*

**True origins:** *cause, origin, strong production and condition;*

**True cessations:** *cessation, pacification, sublimeness, and definite emergence;*

**True paths:** *path, suitability, accomplishment and definite deliverance*

- All these need to be known by means of analytical meditation;
- Compassion needs to be gained through analytical meditation;
- All the perfections need to be stabilized by analytical meditation.

Moreover:

- In order to explain the four noble truths, the two truths need to be explained;
- By understanding the four noble truths, you will understand what the Three Jewels are: you will understand the meanings of
  - the arya sangha;
  - the Dharma Jewel,
  - and of the resultant Buddha Jewel.

**An introduction of Buddhism involves introducing people to the idea of true cessations because that is really what Buddhism is about!**

Any other question? It is good if you have questions!

**Question:** Going back to this **disintegration of karma**. In his **Middle Way, His Holiness** gives an explanation of how because the Prasangika School posits this disintegratedness of karma, they do not have to posit a repository for karmic potencies as do the lower schools. For instance, in the Mind-Only school, the alaya-vijnana is posited, which is a consciousness which is the basis for carrying the

karmic imprints, which will be carried on to future lives. Could Geshe-la please elaborate on this?

**Geshe Jamphel:** if the disintegratedness of karma is asserted, there is no need to assert a separate repository for karmic imprints. In this system, karmic imprints are not lost but brought over to future lives. The lower schools posit different ways in which these karmic latencies are carried over to future lives, which is usually said to be the consciousness.

- The Middle Way Consequence School associates these latencies of karma with the “mere I”, which is also carried from life to life right up to enlightenment.
- The Mind-Only school is not able to give a presentation of this disintegratedness of karma that is associated with the “mere I”. For that reason, they feel they need to posit a mind-basis-of-all that is a repository for karmic latencies.
- This is the same even for the Sautrantika and the Middle Way Autonomy School. Because they are not able to posit the “mere I”, they feel that for those karmic imprints that have accumulated over thousands of years, there needs to be a repository. This is usually said to be the mental consciousness, which will serve as a repository for these karmic imprints, in the same way as we deposit money into the bank for it not to become lost.

**Question:** What fault would there be if we were to say that the karmic latencies are deposited on the mental consciousness, from the point of view of the Prasangikas?

**Geshe Jamphel:** In order to posit that the karmic imprints are deposited on a consciousness, one need to assume that there is the kind of consciousness that is findable in the same way as when we look for the “I”. In the Prasangika, there is no need for this, because in the instance that karma is created, the disintegratedness happens. So there is no need to posit a consciousness for this to carry on. It doesn’t really make sense that we need something to hold the karmic imprints, because whatever consciousness we use to posit as a repository, is itself disintegrating and impermanent. If you feel that you need to posit a consciousness to carry the karmic imprints, it is the same as saying you need a handbag to carry all these imprints with you!

The “mere I” is not the same as the consciousness, as it is merely imputed on the aggregates. It is not findable. If you try to posit the consciousness as the repository for karmic imprints, then it is the same as positing a handbag to carry them around...

**Question:** Chandrakirti states that this disintegratedness is merely imputed, and it is associated with the “mere I”, which is also merely imputed. He also says that the only way this makes sense is to connect these imprints to the “mere I”, and not to any consciousness.

**Geshe Jamphel:** It actually makes a lot of sense for us to posit disintegratedness with the “mere I” rather than any kind of repository consciousness. This is because the creator of karma is the “mere I” and the experiencer of the results of karma is also the “mere I”, so why do you need anything else? This “mere I” is not something findable; it is merely imputed on the aggregates. Why not simply associate this

karma with the “mere I”? There is no need to posit a bag for you to hold the karmic latencies that are troublesome and so on. There is no need to posit a container! You need a bag to hold your money but this is not the case with karmic latencies. It is not the case that our karmic latencies can be stolen by some thieves and that we cannot bring them with us to our future lives!

**Question:** Does this work in the same way for non-contaminated karma? Is it held by the “mere I” in the same way?

**Geshe Jamphel:** There is no problem in positing uncontaminated karma in the same way. Why not associate it with the “mere I” in the same way that karmic latencies are associated with the “mere I”? Uncontaminated karma is also created by the “I”, so why does the “I” not carry that karma? For the Chittamatra that assert the mind basis of all, it is not enough to assert sic consciousness; they feel the need to posit the mind basis-of-all. This is because they say that it is not appropriate for non-virtuous karma and virtuous karma to be deposited in the same location. But this is their problem...

**Question:** Is the disintegratedness of karma within the aggregate of compositional factors?

**Geshe Jamphel:** Yes. Why do you ask this question?

**Student:** To see the link between the “mere I” and the aggregates.

**Geshe Jamphel:** That’s fine. It belongs to the aggregate of compositional factors.

**Question:** When we say that a phenomenon is merely imputed, we say that it is merely imputed by the mind. But is the mind itself also merely imputed by mind?

**Geshe Jamphel:** Yes, yes. Mind is also imputed by mind. To say that something is merely imputed by conception is to say it exists, but not from its own side...

Let’s stop for today.

DEDICATION

## DAY 5 – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014

All buddhist tenet systems accept dependent arising. However, they are not the same in subtlety. On account of that, the emptiness or selflessness they assert is also of different subtlety.

1. We have the **Hinayana tenet** systems, the **Vaibhasika** and the **Sautrantika**, which are able to refute the existence of a permanent partless and unitary self, and on the slightly more subtle level, they are also able to refute the self-supporting substantially existent self. However, their objet of negation is not subtle. Therefore, in the Hinayana they do not refute the self of phenomena – according to them, the self of phenomena does not exist; otherwise this would mean phenomena do not exist.

As for the **Mahayana** schools:

2. The **Chittamatra School** posit dependent arising as being cause and effect, and they do not posit any level subtler than that. They posit gross matter that is made of a collection of subtle particles; they also posit the existence of mind basis-of-all. The Chittamatra posits an emptiness of object and subject being different substances. However, they are not able to posit anything subtler than that.
3. In the **Svatantrika system** there is a subtler presentation of dependent arising – on top of being able to posit dependence from the point of view of cause and effect, they also posit a dependent arising that is dependent on parts. Phenomena depend on their parts. As a result of this subtler level of dependent arising, they are able to posit the emptiness of true existence. But for this school, it refers to the fact that phenomena are posited by the mind on their own uncommon mode of existence appearing to an awareness. But this is a phenomenon that is not merely posited by the mind; and it is also not the subtlest way to posit emptiness.
4. As for the **Prasangika**, they have the *subtlest* way of positing emptiness: *phenomena are merely posited by conception, merely posited by thought*. As a result of this very subtle way of positing emptiness, they say that reality is un-findable when you look for the object. Their emptiness is independent of any existence from the object's side.

All schools have therefore their own assertions on what dependent arising should mean. As a consequence, their presentation of emptiness also differs in terms of subtlety.

- *All these buddhist schools assert that ignorance is the first of the twelve links of dependent origination, which causes us to circle in cyclic existence.*
- *All of them accept that ignorance is a factor of un-knowing.*
- Under the influence of ignorance, even though living beings do not wish for suffering, they create the causes for it;
- and even though they wish for happiness, they don't know how to create it; they don't apply the methods to create happiness.
- All these schools assert that ignorance is responsible for the suffering of sentient beings;
- however, their assertion of what ignorance is varies in terms of subtlety.
- All the schools accept that beginningless ignorance is the first of the twelve links of dependent origination; but the meaning they give to it is different for every school.
- The **Svatantrika School** and below accept that *selflessness of persons is the absence of a self-supporting substantially existent person; and*
- they claim that the first link of the 12 links is precisely the conception of a self-supporting substantially existent person.
- **Svatantrika and Chittamatra** do assert a conception of self of phenomena, but they do not say this is a cause for living beings to be circling in samsara.



- Accordingly they assert that in order for us to become liberated from samsara, there is no need to liberate ourselves from the conception of self of phenomena;
- However, this is a shortcoming in their tenet system, because in reality, in order to become free from samsara, we also need to overcome this kind of conception.

So:

- *These schools do not know how to posit the concept of a self of phenomena as being the first of the twelve links of dependent origination;*
- *Therefore, they do not know how to posit emptiness.*
- *As a result, they do not really know how to posit the Dharma Jewel properly;*
- *and as a result of this, they are not able to posit the Sangha Jewel properly;*
- *because of this they do not know how to posit the Buddha Jewel, which is complete enlightenment, properly.*
- *That is to say, these Schools have a coarser presentation of reality.*
- The Schools that do posit dependent arising as being merely cause and effect, ie, dependent arising dependent on causes, are not able to posit the emptiness of inherent existence;
- The schools that **are** able to posit dependent arising in a *subtler manner*, claiming that dependent arising also means dependence on parts, are nevertheless still not able to posit final reality which is emptiness.
- On the **subtlest level**, dependent arising refers to mere imputation by conception; therefore, the School that posits this is able to posit the subtlest emptiness. The reasoning of dependent arising here proves the subtlest emptiness of dependent arising. This school is able to present the first of the twelve links of dependent origination as the conception of inherent existence, and say that, *by separating from this, we can separate completely from the afflictions, in an exhaustive way.*

*What is the ignorance that is the first of the twelve links of dependent origination? This ignorance is a conception of self, such that this self is findable either among the aggregates or then as an object separate from the aggregates. Such a self exists independently, inherently. This does not mean that every time we think of the "I" we are holding to it as inherent existence. Even the Buddha has a consciousness apprehending an "I", such as in the concept of self and others.*

**The ignorance apprehending the "I" holds it to be existing independently;** and this contradicts reality, and is therefore a mistaken or wrong consciousness. When we have a conception of self, it holds to the "I" as findable among the aggregates. The person wishes for happiness and does not want suffering; the conception of self holds such a person to be findable among the aggregates.

However, it is possible to have a valid cognizer apprehending the "I". This is because the "I" exists conventionally, exists imputedly. The aggregates and the consciousness also exist conventionally; therefore, it is possible to have a valid cognizer apprehending the "I".

What is the cause of samsara? What is the cause of resultant suffering? The cause is a conception of "I" that holds it to exist in a findable way. As a result of holding onto outer and inner phenomena in a way that contradicts reality we give rise to minds of affliction such as attachment and aversion.

*Only a correct understanding by knowing that (a) the self is dependent arising, (b) it exists conventionally, and (c) it exists in a way that depends on the aggregates, can serve as an antidote to the conception of an inherent existence self.  
This understanding can also counteract the afflictions.*

We can have thoughts wishing for happiness, wishing that the "I" is able to enjoy the happiness of higher rebirths and liberation of full enlightenment. It is possible to enjoy such happiness. We can have the thought wishing for happiness: "I wish for happiness"; "I wish for happiness of good rebirth"; "I wish for the happiness of liberation"; "I wish for the happiness of buddhahood"...

**This kind of wish is correct, it is not attachment.  
In fact, this kind of thought can serve as an antidote to attachment!**

The mind seeking enlightenment for the benefit of infinite sentient beings is a valid mind. It wishes to dispel their suffering and place them into a state of happiness. This kind of wish is a cause for the elimination of thoughts and the acquirement of all good qualities. In that way, this thought **is an antidote to attachment; it cannot be attachment!**

The mind of anger or hatred only gives us suffering: it does not give us any happiness; it only brings us suffering and destroys the roots of virtue. The mind of anger has many faults. We should regard it as a terrible state of mind. When we are angry, even our facial expression becomes frightening, and when we open our mouths to speak, only harsh and unpleasant words come out. Physically, due to anger, we engage in harsh actions. The result of anger is only suffering, as it causes us to destroy the roots of virtues we have previously created. It is the source of much negativity; it causes us to be reborn in lower realms in future, and moreover, it causes us to have an ugly appearance.

Anger has no good quality at all – it has only faults! It not only makes ourselves miserable, it also causes the people around us to become unhappy!

***The antidote to anger is love.***  
*We should think about the reasons why we should cultivate love,  
and try to counteract our afflictions.*  
*When we generate love, we are wishing all sentient beings to have happiness.*

***The cultivation of love immediately relaxes our mind!***

*When we feel tired, simply by thinking of love, our bodies will become refreshed,  
our mind will relax and we will experience happiness wherever we go.  
This state of love is something where we feel close to sentient beings and feel  
affection wherever we are...*

We need to try our best to reduce and eliminate our afflictions. In the case of anger, we need to try our best to cultivate love and compassion, and this can only occur through the practice of analytical meditation. This cannot be done through just the placement meditation. Also we can only attain the practice of love and compassion by ourselves; others cannot give this to us.

We need to think of the faults of anger, how it only harms us in this life. We need to think of love, which is a flawless state of mind – this mind has no fault, it bestows happiness and peace. It can only bring about the best results!

Try to transform your mind, because  
**the meaning of dharma is transformation of mind!**

*Try your best not to generate afflictions; try to study and contemplate on dependent arising and emptiness, because this method for dependent arising is really the method for pacifying the afflictions.*

- ❖ By cultivating love and compassion, we will appreciate the need for understanding dependent arising and emptiness.
- ❖ This is because through the cultivation of love and compassion we want all beings to be happy and free from suffering.
- ❖ This can only be achieved when we become free from ignorance.
- ❖ We become free from ignorance when we understand dependent arising and emptiness.
- ❖ Therefore, we need to think of the faults of ignorance and try our best to counteract it!

In order to be able to properly generate renunciation, love, compassion and bodhicitta, as well as all the grounds and paths, we need to tread the path of dependent arising and emptiness – there is no other path!

- We need to gather the accumulation of merits and wisdom:
- ✓ In order to accumulate merits, the best methods are the cultivation of love, compassion and bodhicitta.
- ✓ To gather the accumulation of wisdom, there is no better method than realizing emptiness, as this is the final antidote to the afflictions.

Our **motivation for dharma practice** should include love, compassion and bodhicitta; in addition, we should think of dependent arising. Without these, all the other things we do, such as purification practices and so on, will only continue to be causes for samsara...

- When we meditate on our breath, this can cause us to relax, but it will be difficult for just this kind of meditation on the breath to become the causes for liberation and buddhahood. To relax, it might be a better idea to go to the beach and take a swim!
- ❖ It is very important for us to understand what the Dharma Jewel is.
- ❖ We need to understand how to actualize cessations;

- ❖ we need to understand how to go for **refuge to the Dharma Jewel** and how this protects us from suffering.
- Then, we will be able to create virtue in relation to the dharma.

*If we do not reflect on dependent arising and emptiness, even though we wish for happiness, we hold it as being inherent existence; even though we don't wish for suffering, we hold it as inherent existence.*

*In other words: **our wishes hold onto non-existent things!***

Even though we do not wish for suffering, by holding onto it as being inherent existence, even though we may try various ways of freeing us from suffering, we are still bound by the conception of inherently existent. Even though we wish for happiness, we hold onto it as being inherently existent, so even though we engage in various methods to achieve it, we still don't do it correctly. We will only be able to achieve what we wish for when we think and realize dependent arising.

*The **emptiness of inherent existence implies that things exist.***

*Emptiness means that things do not exist inherently; it does not deny conventional existence.*

*Because things are empty, they do exist conventionally...*

**Lama Tsong Khapa has said that**

- **appearances dispel the extreme of existence;**
- **and emptiness dispels the extreme of non-existence.**

How does this work?

- **Emptiness** should be understood as refutation of true existence; it does not refute conventional existence. It is not the case that nothing exists. Therefore, **emptiness dispels the extreme of non-existence.**
- On the other hand, **appearances dispel the extreme of existence.** How? Because things are mere appearances, this means they do not exist as they appear. Even though things appear in a vivid way, they don't exist in that way. Therefore, appearance is able to dispel the extreme of existence.
- We should understand that **ignorance causes karma.**
- In order to dispel ignorance, we need to realize emptiness,
- and to realize emptiness, we need to do a detailed study of the various tenet systems, especially that of the Middle Way Consequence School.
- We need to familiarize ourselves with the object of negation, and in this way, dispel ignorance, which causes us to accumulate karma.

Ignorance is the cause of other afflictions such as attachment and anger. These three, ignorance, attachment and anger are known as the **three poisons**. These in turn give rise to other root and secondary afflictions, under which we create the **three types of karma**:

1. **Meritorious karma**, which includes the ten virtues which mean the abandonment of the ten non-virtues;
2. **Non-meritorious karma**, which includes the ten non-virtues; and
3. **Unmoving karma**, which is based on concentrations and projects us into the form or formless realm.

As a result of these three types of karma we are thrown into the upper or lower realms...

- *We need to think of the drawbacks of the afflictions on a daily basis, thinking of their faults and in this way being able to reduce negative thoughts. If the afflictions arise, and we simply indulge in them not counteracting them, we will continue creating non-meritorious karma. If we are callous and non-conscientious, we will continue creating negative karma.*

All of you have engaged in rigorous study since you were small. You have learned science, which makes it easier for you to engage in analysis. Unlike some people in the East, who have no such background, you are able to undertake to analysis to see how things are. In the East, people are mostly interested in accumulating merits, and of course this is good, but it is not enough. In some parts of the world, people can do practices such as circumambulations, lighting candles and incense, but they don't know how to really engage into practice by means of study and contemplation.

You have very favourable backgrounds which enable you to engage into analysis into reality. You have scientific backgrounds; you know what scientific research is about. Therefore, try to realize selflessness of persons. This is easier than analysing selflessness of phenomena. His Holiness has said it is very important to examine how things exist in analytical way.

## SECOND SESSION

At the end of the previous session we were talking about the accumulation of karma, under ignorance. The latencies are deposited on the consciousness, and said to be associated with the "mere I". Once an action is created, one deposits what is called the **latencies of karma** – the potential of karma to produce and experience. Not long after it is deposited on the consciousness, on the "mere I", with which it becomes associated.

1. From the first link, **ignorance**,
2. we have the second link, **karma**; and
3. the third link is **consciousness**. This can be divided into two:
  - **Causal** consciousness
  - **Effect** consciousness

We can say that the person is merely imputed on the five aggregates; we can also say that the person is merely imputed on the consciousness. But it will not be found upon analysis.

**Karma has the potential to issue forth a result.  
As discussed yesterday, this potential is called the disintegratedness  
of karma.**

In the **Prasangika School**, we talk about the **basis which is imbued with karma**, which can be of **two types**:

- a. Temporal basis and
- b. Final basis

*We can posit the **person as being the final basis for being this depository**, for holding the karmic imprints.*

In a general sense, **latency does not have to refer to karma**. We can talk about latency of consciousness. Latency basically refers to a potential which gives rise to its results upon meeting the right conditions. For example, when we go to sleep, our latencies, which abide with the “mere I”, become dormant. Upon waking up again, these latencies become manifest again.

We can call these latencies “**seeds**” – which later will produce results.

- Similarly, we can talk about the **latencies of the afflictions**.
- Latencies can be of several types.
- We can talk about latencies of afflictions, or seeds of afflictions.
- We should understand that the **latencies of afflictions**, which give rise to afflictions, are the **afflictive obscurations** and not knowledge obscurations. In fact, the Arhats have to eliminate all afflictive obscurations in order to attain liberation; and the afflictions that remain are called knowledge obscurations, which do not need to be abandoned in order to attain mere liberation from samsara. For example, *hearer and solitary realizer arhats do not need to abandon the knowledge obscurations in order to attain liberation*.
- They do not have the ability to do this - only buddhas have abandoned all knowledge obscurations.

What I have just explained can be quite difficult to grasp unless you have previously engaged into study. However, *you should make effort in daily life to abandon these afflictions*. All these different types of afflictions, as listed above, would be too difficult for you to grasp. However, you could try and make effort in lessen your attachment, anger, pride, jealousy. In our daily lives, we should keep reminding ourselves about the drawbacks of these afflictions.

**Karma** can be divided into two types:

1. **Karma that is intention**. This refers to the **motivation** you have to engage in your activities.
2. **Intended karma** – depending on your motivation, you engage into different activities. With a good motivation, you engage helping others and studying the dharma.

Conversely, if we have a bad motivation, then even though on the physical and verbal level we may behave very pleasantly, such as having a big smile on our faces, speaking in a very sweet way, still, with the motivation to deceive others, we create non-virtue. This is something that happens quite frequently. Say, someone wants to fish: first the person gives food to attract the fish. We can also use mouse traps in order to get rid of them, by putting a nice piece of cheese so as to attract the mice and catch them. Actually we used to do this in Nalanda! But the trap would not kill the mouse; just catch it (so that it could be taken far away...)

Sometimes we can have a good motivation for doing something, but in terms of our physical and verbal motivation, we can appear as being rough and unpleasant. If we are trying to change someone's behaviour – such as parents do – we act in harsh ways. Parents, with good motivation, have to punish their children sometimes too! By depending on the motivation, we create different kinds of virtuous and non-virtuous activities.

Examples of **non-meritorious karmas** are non-virtues such as killing.

1. Among the non-virtuous actions of **body**, the worst one is killing;
  2. Among the non-virtues of **speech**, the worst one is lying; and
  3. Among the non-virtues of **mind**, harmful intent is the worst.
- If we create a **great** non-meritorious action, we will be reborn into hell;
  - **Medium**, rebirth as a hungry ghost
  - Slight, rebirth as an animal.

We should understand that in general, non-meritorious actions cause suffering, whereas meritorious actions cause good rebirths.

The third category of karma, **unmoving karma**, can only be accumulated on the basis of concentration. If you have not attained calm abiding, shamata, you will not be creating this kind of karma.

*Not only do we want upper rebirths, we want human rebirths in which we have complete sense faculties and so on.*

*Not only that, we want the perfect human rebirth, in which we have all the freedoms and endowments.*

***All these good results are dependent on our creation of meritorious karma.***

These kinds of karma that we are discussing are all **contaminated** karmas, as they cause us to be reborn in samsara. Non-meritorious karma is a non-virtue, it is contaminated. Even un-moving karma is contaminated, as it causes rebirth in cyclic existence. Even meritorious karmas cause rebirth in the upper realms in samsara. Therefore, they are all causes for suffering. This does not mean that we should not create meritorious karma, just because it is contaminated.

In order to progress on the path, we need good rebirths, and meritorious karma. So we have to strive to accumulate that karma, for otherwise we cannot get another rebirth as a human being, and without such a rebirth, we have no opportunity to practise the dharma...

Karma can also be discussed in terms of

1. **Projecting** karma
  2. **Actualizing** karma
- If we want to purify our negative karma, we need to meditate on emptiness, because this has the ability to purify all our negative karma, no matter how much of that we have.
  - Without meditation on emptiness, there is no way we can purify our karma. This is one reason why it is so important for us to meditate on emptiness.
  - We create all kinds of actions, karma and the root of all our suffering and afflictions is ignorance.
  - There is nothing that can eliminate ignorance completely except for the meditation on emptiness.
- Therefore, **meditation on emptiness is the best of all practices.**

*When we talk about engaging in purification using the four opponent powers, meditation on emptiness is the most powerful of all. Not even bodhicitta is as powerful as meditating on emptiness for purification purposes! As said by Shantideva in the Ninth chapter of his **Bodhicharyavattara**:*

*“All the previous branches were taught for the sake of realizing emptiness”*

Following the third link, consciousness we have the **fourth link**, which is

4. **Name and Form.** This begins when the consciousness enters the ovum from the mother and the sperm from the father; it is the start of a human life.
5. **Six Sources:** After being conceived, the being starts to develop the various sense sources; then comes
6. **Contact** with external objects.
7. **Feeling:** through contact, feeling arises;
8. **Craving:** for pleasant feelings, for separation from unpleasant feelings etc;
9. **Grasping:** with the increase of craving, we have grasping;
10. **Existence:** this tenth link makes a connection with a future rebirth, resulting in
11. **Birth**, after which there is
12. **Ageing and death.**

*This is the evolution of the twelve links of dependent origination. The most important links are: **ignorance, action, craving and grasping.***

Therefore (the reversal of the twelve links of dependent origination):

- The 12<sup>th</sup> link is **ageing and death** which we don't want.
- How do we prevent this? By preventing **birth**, the 11<sup>th</sup> link;
- How do we prevent birth in samsara? We need to stop the 10<sup>th</sup> link, **existence**; without stopping existence, we will continue to be born in samsara;
- If we don't want existence, we have to stop **grasping**, the 9<sup>th</sup> link.



- How do we stop grasping? By stopping the 8<sup>th</sup> link, **craving**. In order for us to stop grasping, we have to stop craving, because grasping is the increase of craving, so to get rid of craving, we definitely have to stop grasping!
- How do we stop craving? Craving is a kind of attachment, so we need to stop the 7<sup>th</sup> link, **feeling**, which causes us to have cravings.
- In order to stop feeling, we have to stop the 6<sup>th</sup> link, **contact**.
- In order to stop contact, we need to stop the 5<sup>th</sup> link, **sense sources** – without these, we will not come into contact with objects.
- In order to stop the sense sources, we need to stop the 4<sup>th</sup> link, **name and form**, from which the sense sources develop;
- In order to stop these, we need to stop **consciousness**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> link, which will in turn stop the arising of name and form;
- In order to stop consciousness - *which holds the latency*, we need to stop the **latency**: we need to stop **karma**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> link, which deposits the latency;
- In order to stop karma, we need to stop *afflictions*, which gives rise to karma, and in order to stop afflictions, we need to stop **ignorance, which lies at the root of the 12 links**.

➤ **Finally, in order to stop ignorance, we need to realize emptiness!**

Let's stop for today. Everything traces back to emptiness! (laughter).

Thank you for showing great interest in these teachings; I did not see anyone sleeping, and from my side, I did not get tired at all. When I see people sleeping in the audience, I naturally also feel like going to sleep. And thank you to Venerable Tendar, our SPC, for organizing these teachings.

This time we have been able to meet for five days, and enjoy these explanations. I myself hope that in the future we can meet for longer periods of time: as a whole week or even for 10 days.

I haven't actually read this text\*; rather, the explanations were based on the points that came out, and are not strictly based on the text. If we have more time, we will be able to go through the text.

NOTE: \*Geshe-la based his commentary on a new book, commissioned by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Geshe-la received a copy of this book (in Tibetan) the day these teachings ended, so now he will be able to read it as well. It is a compilation written and carefully checked by several Geshes (from the Three Great Seats) on Buddhist Science and its relevance to modern science. An English translation is in the making, in Dharamsala, and should be available soon.

*Last winter, when Geshe Jamphel had an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Sera-je, His Holiness specifically asked him to teach this book widely here in the West.*

TRANSCRIPT by Irene Turner

Checked (for the English language) by Venerable Bikshuni Dorje and Venerable Sangmo.

This transcript has not been checked against the recordings, so there might be some inaccuracies or errors. Apologies for this! Irene