

DAGRI RINPOCHE

Commentary on

Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (*Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way*)

DAY 1 – Wednesday 19th November 2014

From the very start I'd like to greet the abbot, Geshe Jamphel, the resident Geshe, Geshe Gyaltzen, and all the senior sangha members, the monks and nuns, as well as the lay community present here.

There was a plan for me to come earlier in the year, but this did not happen. Finally I was able to come but due to conditions on the journey I caught a cold, and this is why I wasn't able to teach the last couple of days. I apologise for that!

The topic for the teachings is the text by Nagarjuna – the second Buddha – entitled "Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way" (Sanskrit: *Mulamadhyamikakara*), which is principal among all the texts that he composed. I would like to give you an oral transmission as well as an explanation of this text.

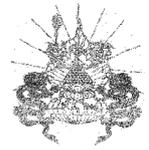
There are two Geshes teaching two intensive study programmes at Nalanda Monastery; on top of that, this is quite an established centre, so I feel that you will probably have received teachings on this text by Nagarjuna. However, there is no fault in offering this explanation. Some people might not like to hear the dharma they have already heard before, but it is actually good to hear the dharma again and again.

When you hear another explanation, you will have a different understanding of this topic. From my side, I don't have anything new to say, but from your side, by listening to this explanation, you might be able to enhance your understanding.

The dharma serves as a way for eliminating mental sufferings, in the same way that a doctor eliminates sufferings of the body. All sentient beings are tormented by the three kinds of sufferings: we have sufferings of ageing, sickness and death, meeting with what we don't want, and not getting what we want.

The sufferings of cyclic existence are likened to an ocean; indeed, samsara is in the nature of suffering. If we just become discouraged when thinking of suffering, without doing anything else, there will never be a time when we can attain liberation. Therefore, there is no point in becoming discouraged when thinking of suffering.

In our world there are many religions. I myself am not familiar with many of them; however, with respect to Buddhism I can say that I've had the opportunity of studying and practising it.



We have a perfect human rebirth, and as a human being, we have intelligence and moreover, are able to meet people who know the dharma in an undecieving manner. With such a method we are able to attain both temporal happiness as well as the everlasting happiness of liberation and enlightenment.

In Buddhism, we find the complete teachings of sutra and tantra. We are able to meet such teachings; besides, we have met teachers that are qualified to teach these methods. We also have the aspiration of wanting to study the dharma. All this means there is a possibility that we can eliminate suffering from its roots. Based on such reasonings, there is no point in feeling discouraged when thinking of suffering.

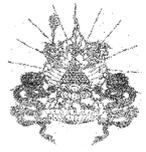
Today I am going to give a brief explanation to some of the verses of Nagarjuna's text, which explain the path that eradicates sufferings from its root and leads to everlasting happiness. Based on what is taught in this text, we have to study and practice. It is not sufficient for us just to study but not to put in practice what we learned, because this would be like having food but not eating it!

The Mahayana dharma does not differentiate among different races, gender, age and so on. The Buddha taught the dharma for the benefit for sentient beings, out of the compassion like that of a mother for her only child. Apart from not knowing the dharma there is no reason why anyone who knows the dharma and puts it into practice will not be able to eliminate suffering and attain happiness. Therefore, we see that the dharma is open to everyone without any discrimination: everyone can benefit from it!

Most of you here are senior students, so you are familiar with the author of this text, Arya Nagarjuna. He was predicted by the Buddha to come to this continent, and he was prophesised to revive the Mahayana dharma, like the sun rising again. In the Buddha's scriptures you find many prophecies such as the place he will be born, how long he will live, etc. In this way, amongst buddhists he is regarded almost like the Buddha himself.

The explanation of this text, "Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way", is divided into 4 sections:

- i. The Title;
- ii. Prostrations of the Translators;
- iii. The Meaning of the Text Itself; and finally
- iv. The Conclusion.



Let us begin with the first of these 4 sections:

Meaning of the Title

The title in Sanskrit is **Prajnanamulamadhyamakakarika**

The various parts of this Sanskrit title, together with their meanings, are as follows:

- ❖ Prajna – wisdom;
- ❖ Nama – name;
- ❖ Mula – root;
- ❖ Madhyamika – middle; and
- ❖ Karika – pacified

The Nalanda tradition of India spread to Tibet in a complete way, so that in Tibet we find the complete transmissions of sutra and tantra from India. These scriptures were translated into Tibetan in a very accurate manner, and it is said that Indian masters such as the abbot Shantarakshita, who lived for a very long time, was able to teach in Tibetan, and also the master Atisha was able to do that.

Why then do we need to state the Sanskrit title in the beginning? The main purpose is to indicate that this text has an authentic source, that it can be traced to a flawless origin. The Buddha himself taught in Sanskrit. Now comes

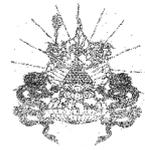
Homage by the Translators:

“*Homage to the Youthful Manjushri*”, which is the homage by the translators before translating this text into Tibetan. Why do the translators pay homage to Manjushri? First of all by making supplications to the deity, obstacles are removed for the translations of the text. Besides, from the homage we are able to understand the subject-matter of this text:

- a. If the text belongs to the **Abidharma** basket, the translators pay homage to *Manjushri*;
- b. If it belongs to the **Vinaya** basket, homage is paid to the *Omniscient One*; and
- c. If the text belongs to the **Sutra** basket, homage is to the *buddhas and bodhisattvas*.

This method has been devised by a dharma king: on one hand it can serve as an identification of the text; on the other, it means that this text has as its subject-matter emptiness, which belongs to what is called Upper Abidharma.

Since Manjushri is the deity of wisdom, one pays homage to him.



Now we move to the third section:

Meaning of the Text

Dedicatory Verses

I pay homage to the perfect complete Buddha,
The best of teachers,
Who taught that dependent-arising are
Neither ceasing nor produced,
Neither annihilated nor permanent,
Neither coming nor going and
Neither different nor the same.
And who taught the peace
That is the complete pacification of elaborations.

We first see homage to the **Buddha**, who is praised for having taught dependent origination; because he saw dependent origination exactly as it is, and gained these realizations in exactly the way they are.

In these two stanzas we see the negation of various things: without coming or going, without distinction or identity etc. We should know that conventionally there is production, and cessation. For example, by depending on various causes and conditions, various things such as trees are produced. The continuation of things also comes to an end; so conventionally we can talk about these things. However, when an arya analyses to see whether phenomena exist as they appear, they are not able to find the designated objects. In the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise these various phenomena cannot be found, and from that point of view it is said that there is no production, no annihilation, no coming and no going, etc.

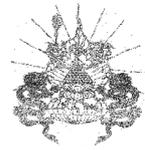
Why does the author pay homage to the Buddha here?

There are a several reasons:

- To show that the author is an excellent being, since excellent beings have this tradition of paying homage to the Buddha at the beginning of their composition;
- Another reason is that their readers will generate faith in the Buddha, and in this way, infinite merits will be accumulated; also, obstacles will be eliminated.

There are many ways of paying homage to the Buddha: for example, one can praise the Buddha by way of the qualities of his body, the 32 major and minor marks. Or we can praise the Buddha by way of the qualities of his mind, perfect wisdom, compassion and power. But here, the Buddha is praised for having taught dependent arising.

There is a special purpose for doing so: all beings suffer in cyclic existence due to their ignorance. This is an ignorance that is confused regarding reality, regarding how things



really exist, and it is by knowing reality that one is able to sever cyclic existence and attain liberation.

By way of this teaching on dependent arising one is able to eliminate ignorance. So it is the essential point of the dharma. By teaching it, the Buddha indicated he was an extraordinary teacher, because it is through this method of understanding dependent arising that one can free oneself from cyclic existence and attain liberation. Without this method of dependent arising one remains trapped in cyclic existence and there is no hope of getting out of it. Therefore, the Buddha taught dependent arising.

In Shantideva's *Engaging in the deeds of a Bodhisattva*, he mentions that although sentient beings do not want suffering, they create the causes of suffering – it's as though they intentionally run towards it; and even though they want happiness, they destroy its causes as if they were enemies. The Buddha was able to realize dependent arising exactly as it is, and taught it to sentient beings out of compassion like loving parents giving advice to their children.

In Buddhism, we say that all happiness and all sufferings come from actions, karma. Apart from one's own actions or karma there is no creator or agent of our own happiness or suffering. By creating karma we create our own causes of experiencing happiness or suffering. Karma comes from ignorance, not understanding reality, so to eliminate karma, we need to eliminate ignorance. It is by understanding reality, dependent arising, that we are able to eliminate ignorance, in the same way that we can eliminate darkness with light. So, by means of the sunlight realization of dependent arising, we are able to eliminate ignorance. So the Buddha is indeed an extraordinary teacher for having taught dependent arising.

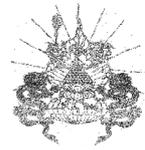
In general, we can talk about two factors: the factor of wisdom and the factor of method. This discussion of dependent arising belongs to the factor of wisdom. On the method side we have things such as love, compassion and bodhicitta.

Trainees of sharp faculty are able to understand the essential point of dependent arising; and they are able to understand that sentient beings circle in cyclic existence powerlessly due to not understanding the reality of dependent arising. With such a realization, love and compassion arise spontaneously for those sentient beings circling powerlessly in samsara. Once having this realization of dependent arising, we will be able to totally eliminate suffering and attain liberation.

I received the transmission of this text from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When he teaches this text, he begins by teaching chapter 26, followed by chapters 18 and 24, before going to the beginning of the text. Imitating His Holiness I will now begin by teaching **Chapter 26**.

This is an examination of the branches of dependent origination. Here we examine the **twelve links of dependent origination** in two ways: first in the forward order, then in the reverse order.

The **forward order** of the 12 Links of dependent origination refers to the process by which there is circling in cyclic existence. We can see that the first link is ignorance, from which we



create karma, which leads to consciousness and so on, which finally leads to old age and death.

We will also be looking at the **reverse order** of the 12 links, which refers to how one gets out of samsara: by stopping ignorance one stops volitional action, by which one stops consciousness and finally, ageing and death.

This teaching on dependent arising can be traced to the Buddha's sutra, in which he spoke how things arise by depending on other phenomena: from this, that arises and so on. We can also talk about these twelve links of dependent origination based on how this doctrine arose. At the time of the Buddha, there were two kings: the king of Uddayana and king Bimbisara. The first one was very wealthy, and gave a very valuable present to the latter, who then was at a loss about what to give back to the kind of Uddayana. He went to see the Buddha asking for advice, and the Buddha advised him to present a painting of the twelve links of dependent origination with some words written at the bottom of this painting.

When this painting was presented to the king of Uddayana, he was able to understand the process of entering cyclic existence, and the way of exiting cyclic existence. Not only the king, but also his queen and ministers were able to attain liberation on dependence on these teachings on dependent arising.

Are you familiar with this depiction of the 12 links? It displays a wheel that is held in the mouth of a monster. This shows how beings circle in cyclic existence powerlessly.

- Right in the centre we see a pig, a rooster and a snake, representing the three poisons;
- On the outer ring of this we see two rings, one representing black, negative karma – where we see beings descending into the lower realms, and the other, white or positive karma where we see beings going upwards towards better realms of existence;
- Next, we see a ring indicating the various rebirth of cyclic existence, and finally we have a ring depicting the twelve links of dependent origination, ignorance and so forth.

Now we read stanza 1 and the first half of stanza 2:

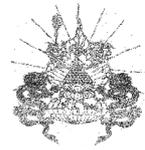
26:1

Those obscured by ignorance, for the sake of rebirth,
Form the three types of compositional actions.
Due to those formed actions
They will migrate.

26:2 ab

With the condition of a compositional action
Consciousness will enter into migrations.

In these lines, we see the role of ignorance. Motivated by **ignorance** – which is the root of cyclic existence - we accumulate **karma** of body, speech and mind. Ignorance in this context is the factor opposite to the wisdom realizing emptiness. The latencies or potentials of our actions are then placed on the **consciousness**.



The twelve links of dependent origination can be completed over 3 lifetimes, or also be completed over 2 lifetimes. Here, we assert the existence of past and future lives. There are people who can remember their past lives. There is an account which I came to know about: last year I went to a place called Tawang, and there was this story of Dorje Khandro, who was killed in a car accident; he was then reborn in a place which was at the bottom of the field where he used to live, at the top of the hill. As a child, he used to say “this is not my house; my house is at the top”. In his previous life, he had a wife, whom he was able to recall. He made statements such as “I know her, but I can't remember her name”. Having displayed such unusual characteristics, his previous family at the top of the hill came to know about this child, and when they went to visit, the child was able to recognize them and say their names. The family then offered a lot of money to the new family requesting the child to be given to them. When the child was brought back to his previous family, he was able to recognize the vehicle that caused his accident and killed him. He also went to the office where he worked in his previous life, using a computer – and without having been taught he was immediately able to use his old computer and start writing again!

There are many such accounts of people that are able to remember their past lives; therefore, we assert the existence of past and future lives!

When examining whether the self has a beginning or an end, what we need to examine is the mind rather than the body. Using logic, we should see whether it is possible for the mind to have a beginning. Is it possible for us to say that at a certain point the mind didn't exist, but then it started to exist? Is it possible that there is an end to the mind? To assert the existence of a beginning or end of the mind contradicts logic; therefore, we assert that the mind is beginningless and has no end.

What do you think: does the mind have a beginning? Is there a start to consciousness?

There is no beginning to the mind.

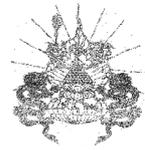
When we think of the body, according to scientists, in terms of the substantial continuity there is also no beginning to the body. What do you think, do you agree?

Of course, we have this body now, and when we die, the body is left behind. But when you examine the body in terms of its substantial continuity, then we see there is no beginning...

We create actions or karma under the influence of attachment or aversion, which come from ignorance. Motivated by ignorance, we produce attachment and aversion. Do you have anything to say about that?

Question: what do you mean that the scientists say that the body has no beginning? The body of a person looks as if it has a beginning...

Rinpoche: I also agree that this body has a beginning, but here we are not talking just about this. When we examine the body, we will see that it is composed of many substances, which have a continuity; therefore they do not have a beginning!



26:2 bc
When the consciousness has entered
Name and form will be established.

26:3
When name and form have been established
The six sense spheres will emerge.
In dependence upon the six sense spheres
Contact will actually occur.

26:4
It is only produced in dependence
Upon the eye, visual form and recollection.
Thus, in dependence upon name and form,
That which will produce consciousness.

The twelve links of dependent origination as I mentioned can be completed over either 3 or then 2 lifetimes. Let's examine these 2 cases. First, let's see what happens if the 12 links span over **three lifetimes**:

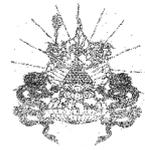
At the beginning, motivated by ignorance, one creates volitional action. The latency of this karma is deposited on the consciousness. Now the person dies, and in a future life this latency is nourished by craving and grasping, propelling towards a new rebirth.

In another life, you have the links craving, grasping and becoming, which take place in the 2nd life. Then one is propelled in a new rebirth where the remaining links are completed, and one gets the aggregates of the new rebirth.

In **two lifetimes**:

We begin with the first three links, ignorance motivating action - the latency of which is deposited on the consciousness. At the time of death, craving and grasping nourishes this latency such that it becomes activated, and you have the 10th link, becoming. The first three links, plus craving and grasping occur in one lifetime; then one is projected into a new rebirth where the remaining links become activated.

- In the twelve links of dependent origination we first have the propelling causes: ignorance, action and consciousness.
- From these propelling causes we have the propelled effects, the next 4 links:
- Consciousness enters the semen and blood of the parents, which is the 4th link, name and form.
- The being then develops the 6 sense spheres over time, the 5th link.
- From these we have the 6th link, contact – which refers to the conversion of the 3: sense power, object and consciousness.
- from contact, feeling arises.



26:5

And is the assembling of the three –
The eye, visual form and consciousness – is contact.
That contact
Is the source of feeling.

Do you have any questions?

Question: we say these things take place over 2 or 3 lifetimes, but it looks very much that they can all happen simultaneously in one lifetime? They seem to me to happen simultaneously. How can we know which ones happen in which lifetime?

Rinpoche: as I mentioned before, you cannot have a complete set of 12 links occurring in a single lifetime; they need at least 2 lifetimes to be complete. Of course, if you look at a specific cause and its effect, then there is a relation: there is this dependent arising relationship between these two. In this way, you can see that there is no simultaneous occurrence...

DAY 2 – Thursday 20th November 2014

The Mahayana dharma that we are going to listen to explains the state of reality, based on this inconceivable treatise. Therefore, it is important to listen to these teachings with a very pure motivation. This treatise is taught for the sake of totally eliminating suffering and leading all the way to omniscience. As seekers of liberation, we need to listen to this explanation very carefully.

So please, generate a good motivation!

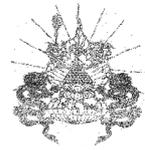
This treatise that we are studying is very profound, and each word has deeper layers of meanings. Due to the kindness of my teachers, I was able to receive teachings on this text. In general, it is difficult to provide meaning commentary on these teachings, but even though I don't really understand this text thoroughly, I will offer an explanation to you.

Today we are going to look at the propelled effects in detail. Yesterday we looked at the propelling causes (which are the first three links), and the 4 propelling effects. We looked at the second half of stanza two, which says:

26:2 bc

When the consciousness has entered
Name and form will be established.

Motivated by ignorance (the 1st link) one creates volitional action (karma), the latency of which is deposited on the consciousness. When activated this latency propels us into a new rebirth. When we take rebirth, the consciousness enters the semen and blood of our future parents, and from then on we have the formation of "name and form" (the 4th link). This is an



expression that refers to the 5 aggregates. “form” refers to the form aggregate, and “name” to the remaining 4, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness. Once we take rebirth in this way, the foetus starts developing.

26:3 ab
When name and form have been established
The six sense spheres will emerge.

After name and form have developed, the 6 sense spheres develop: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mental sense consciousnesses. The word of “sense sphere” in Tibetan has this connotation of “production” and “increase”, in the same way that a seed placed in the soil is the cause for production and increase.

26:3 cd
In dependence upon the six sense spheres
Contact will actually occur.

Depending on the 6 sense spheres, contact comes into being. This refers to the aggregation of the sense sphere, the object and the consciousness.

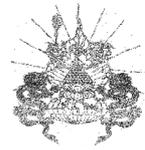
26:4
It is only produced in dependence
Upon the eye, visual form and recollection.
Thus, in dependence upon name and form,
That which will produce consciousness.

This is stating how contact enables us to utilize the object. take the eye sense consciousness, with its object, form. The eye sense power serves as the dominant condition, the form as the object condition and the apprehension which is consciousness, as the immediately preceding condition. Through the combination of these three factors, the eye consciousness is produced. Similarly for the other consciousnesses: ear, nose, tongue etc.

26:5 ab
And is the assembling of the three –
The eye, visual form and consciousness – is contact.

This is repeating what has been said above: through the aggregation of the respective factors for the consciousness we have the various kinds of contact.

You might wonder why the 4th link contains 2 paths, name and form. This is because rebirth in the form or formless realms entails having no form, but we have the other 4 aggregates, therefore the expression “name” to designate them.



26:5 cd
That contact
Is the source of feeling.

The way the three conditions come together to produce consciousness is similar for each of the 6 sense spheres. For example, due to the conversion of the eye sense sphere, form and the eye consciousness there is contact. Contact here refers to the utilization of the object.

To state this explicitly, we can have 6 types of contact: with respect to the eye, the ear, the nose and so on. Due to these different types of contacts, we are able to utilize the objects. Through the conversion of the 3 conditions, one is able to contact different types of objects. In general, these objects can be attractive, unattractive or neutral. Due to contact, feeling, which is the 7th link, comes into being.

Moving into the 6th stanza, we have craving:

26:6 ab
Due to the condition of feeling, there will be craving.
There is craving on account of the feeling.

Conditioned by craving, feeling arises. If we experience happiness feeling, we will crave not to be separated from it; if we experience suffering feelings, we will crave to be separated from it. If the feeling is neutral, one will crave to be in that state.

26:6 cd
When there is craving, there will be grasping.
There are four types of grasping.

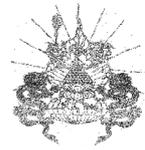
With craving comes grasping, and with these links we nourish the latencies of karma that have been previously deposited. This latency of karma propels us into a new rebirth.

26:7 ab
When there is grasping
Existence for the grasper will fully arise.

This refers to the 10th link, becoming. This potentialized latency becomes the cause for future suffering. But it has not yet come into being; so here we are giving the name of the result, "becoming", to the cause for future existence.

26:7 cd
When there is no grasping
There will be liberation and hence no rebirth.

In these two lines it is stated that if we have no grasping, there will not be the link of existence; ie, we will not take rebirth. This refers to a situation when the person has realized



emptiness. By realizing emptiness, there will be no grasping, and in the absence of grasping, the conditions of creating suffering will not come about.

Let's take a seed: it has the potential to give rise to a sprout when water, fertilizer, soil etc. are present. However, if these are not present, the sprout will not be produced. Similarly, even though there might be karmic latencies for rebirth, if there is no grasping, there will be no condition for nourishing and activating these karmic latencies. As a result we will not take rebirth in cyclic existence.

To illustrate this further, let's take a Hinayana arhat (foe-destroyer). This arhat can have many karmic seeds in his continuum, but because he does not have afflictions, the karmic latencies will not be nourished and activated; as a result a foe-destroyer no longer takes rebirth in cyclic existence.

By realizing emptiness we will become free from grasping. In that way we will be able to attain liberation from cyclic existence; we will become free from the bondage to samsara. When we talk about samsara or cyclic existence, this does not refer for example to the mountains, the fields, the buildings that we see around us. Those are actually locations of cyclic existence; but they are not cyclic existence itself.

Cyclic existence or samsara refers to the continuity of the contaminated appropriated aggregates, because these aggregates are the basis for suffering. We suffer because we have these contaminated appropriated aggregates, which are propelled by our past karma and become the basis for our experiencing all sorts of sufferings.

26:8

Existence, moreover, is the five aggregates.

From existence there will be birth.

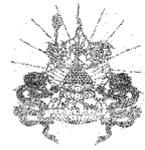
Aging, death, sorrow,

Lamentation, suffering,

In the first half of stanza 8 we talk about becoming giving rise to birth. Becoming, as explained above, is the potentialized karma that propels into a new rebirth: so, through becoming the next link, birth, arises. From the link of existence – becoming – one takes rebirth and has the 5 contaminated appropriated aggregates. Once we have these, without choice, we have to experience sufferings.

In the 3rd line of stanza 8, three kinds of suffering are mentioned: ageing - to become older; and our birth will eventually end up in death. Sorrow refers to mental anguish. Even though we don't desire the slightest suffering, we are forced to experience these sufferings of ageing and death.

Suffering is very much based upon the mind: to talk about my own personal experience, when the communists invaded Tibet, there was so much fear, sorrow and terror in the minds of people. There was the sorrow of not having access to the dharma and the teachings. There was a very deep kind of sadness associated with this situation. At that time I was very small, very young, yet I had the taste of this sadness, so when the opportunity came up to learn some words of these texts, even when given instructions with just a few words,



immediately the suffering from the mind vanished. So we talk about this sorrow really being based on the mind.

Here we saw mention of “grief”, which is a verbal expression which refers to what manifests due to mental sorrow. There is also mention of suffering, which refers to physical sufferings, which come about to the 5 physical senses.

26:9 ab
Mental unhappiness and strife
Will fully arise from birth.

Unhappiness is a state of unease of the mind; agitation, disturbance. All of these come from birth, including the above-mentioned ageing and death, sorrow and so on. Once we are born into the contaminated appropriated aggregates in samsara, there is no choice but to experience these various kinds of misery.

26:9 cd
Thus, this entire mass of suffering
Will arise.

As a result of having been born in cyclic existence, one has only a mass of suffering – not just one suffering, but a heap of various kinds of sufferings. There is also this emphasis that points out that there is only suffering. This is because in cyclic existence there is no true, uncontaminated happiness; what we consider happiness is actually only the suffering of change.

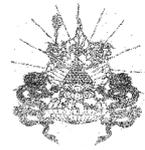
Up to this point, we have been discussing the **forward order** of the twelve links of dependent origination: we saw how from the 1st link, the 2nd, action is created; from that, comes consciousness where the latencies are deposited.

From the 10th verse onwards, we can look at the **reverse order**: we examine where the suffering comes from: it comes from the previous causes. If we stop ignorance, we stop action; by stopping action, we stop consciousness and by stopping consciousness we can prevent the 4 propelled effects.

So we can look at the reverse order of the twelve links of dependent origination:

26:10 ab
Because the root of samsara is compositional actions
The wise do not form them.

Action refers to the 2nd link volitional action, motivated by ignorance. The root of cyclic existence is karma, which comes from ignorance. From here I can give you a word



commentary – word-by-word, which is not an easy task, so I apologise for any mistakes there might be in my commentary now.

Ignorance produces the afflictions attachment and aversion: from ignorance one develops attachment to one's own side, and aversion to the other side. Ignorance is un-knowing, and causes us to make mistakes. Ignorance is obscured regarding how things exist in reality, so all kinds of other afflictions develop from this, in the same way that a blind person makes all kinds of mistakes.

The root of cyclic existence is action, or volitional karma, therefore the wise ones do not act. The word "wise" here can have many different connotations, and here we are not just talking about someone who is scholarly. The wise ones are the ones that understand reality, the mode of existence of phenomena, which refers to the arya beings. By perceiving reality directly, they no longer create propelling karma, and as a result of that, they no longer take birth in cyclic existence.

26:10 cd

Thus, the unwise are agents

But the wise are not because they have seen suchness.

Those who do not understand reality don't understand that the meaning of dependent arising is emptiness, and they are agents in the sense that they create volitional actions through which they have to again take birth in cyclic existence.

Someone who has not directly realized emptiness creates the karma to be reborn in cyclic existence; but the wise ones seeing suchness, are not an agent: They do not create volitional action that cause rebirth in cyclic existence. The arhat has realized reality, emptiness; and therefore no longer creates actions to be reborn in samsara.

26:11 ab

When ignorance has ceased,
actions will not arise.

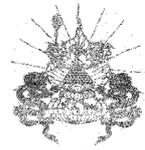
We have already seen previously that once ignorance has ceased, the 2nd link, volitional action, will also cease. Someone who has realized emptiness will no longer create volitional actions.

26:11 cd

Ignorance will cease

By cultivating suchness through knowing it.

You can see from this presentation here that the description of the forward order of the twelve links of dependent origination is extensive, whereas the presentation of the reverse order is very brief.



What we mainly see here is the explanation of ceasing ignorance; the text goes not into detail about how the remaining links will cease. There is a good explanation for this, namely that in the other chapters of this text there is extensive refutation of inherent existence.

We see that here there is not an extensive refutation of each of the twelve links of dependent origination and mainly in this last part of the chapter, we see refutation of ignorance: when ignorance has ceased, the next link will occur. There is no detail which of the remaining links cease. This is because once ignorance is refuted, all the other links will be refuted as well.

The root of cyclic existence is ignorance regarding reality, and by understanding the meaning of dependent arising of the twelve links of dependent origination we can be led to a realization of emptiness, eventually. We should understand that the ignorance we are trying to abandon is two-fold:

1. The conception of *self of persons*; and
2. The conception of *self of phenomena*

We have a conception of self since beginningless time. We need to examine whether or not we have these two conceptions in our continuum, and based on that kind of analysis, go on to realize the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena.

The root of cyclic existence is the ignorance that is a conception of self. This statement is not a lie, as it describes reality. If we simply leave it as it is, it will continue to be simply a statement. But we need to take it seriously and try to understand what it is trying to say.

The conception of self is the real enemy and we need to make every effort to counteract it. We have not been able to weaken or destroy it since beginningless time, but now, with access to this information, we should understand where the mistake we have been making is, and try to counteract it.

It would be useful to see how our own self and that of others is illusion-like; and try to come to a conviction regarding this, and meditate on this point.

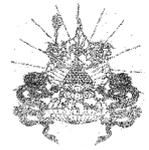
Although we have aggregates that are considered to be contaminated, these very same aggregates are also the support of our perfect human rebirth endowed with the freedoms and privileges. This is considered to be very valuable. For the sake of taking care of our body we have to give it food, provide dwelling and clothing. If you examine the way we take care of our body, it is as if we are its servant.

Since we put so much effort into our body, we also have to make sure to make it work. This body will not remain for a long time, so while it stays with us, we have to make sure we use it well, putting an end to cyclic existence. We have to use our body in such a way that we come to realize that the meaning of dependent arising is emptiness.

This is really the way to make our human existence meaningful.

I'm not saying that you have to sit stiffly in the meditative posture, because meditation is a mental activity, which can be done at any time during the day. You can do it when you are eating, and you can even meditate on emptiness when you are sleeping!

The point here is that you need to meditate on emptiness.



26:12
Due to this and that prior link having ceased
This and that latter link will not arise.
The entire mass of suffering
Will thus perfectly cease.

“This and that” in the first line refers to the earlier links; and “this and that” in the second line refers to the later links. Through the cessation of the first links, the later links will no longer manifest.

In this way, the entire mass of sufferings cease completely. “Completely” means that with the elimination of ignorance, suffering becomes eradicated totally, so that not even the name “suffering” will exist; and in this way, one is able to attain the everlasting liberation from samsara.

One of the past Khadampa masters gave the following advice to someone who complained to him about suffering and pain:

“This is the nature of cyclic existence, this is the nature of samsara; there is pain and sorrow. There is no need to shout and complain about that. What you need to do if you don't want this is to abandon cyclic existence. How do you do this? You need to abandon birth in cyclic existence. How do you do that? You need to destroy the causes of samsara. By meditating on emptiness and dependent arising, you will be able to destroy suffering.”

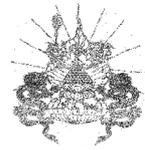
The Buddha gave many different kinds of teachings, and they were all given for the sake of sentient beings attaining the state of liberation and omniscience. Even though there are teachings that are for the sake of sentient beings attaining temporal happiness of good rebirths, the long term of all the teachings of the buddha is the attainment of liberation from samsara, and the attainment of omniscience of full enlightenment.

The buddha revealed the unmistakable path for all sentient beings for the sake of eventually leading them to enlightenment. The Buddha taught only reality, so it is important for us to make good use of our perfect human rebirth, engaging in hearing, contemplation and meditation on his teachings.

Finally, we come to the last section which is the conclusion:

“this is the 26th Chapter, examining dependent origination”.

In this way, we came to the end of tonight's teachings.



DAY 3 - Friday 21st November 2014

We start with the motivation. Our motivation for listening to these Dharma teachings is to benefit all mother sentient beings, so that their purpose will be achieved - the complete stage of a Buddha. To be able to do that we listen to these teachings today.

[Rinpoche will be teaching the **18th chapter** of Mulamadhyamikakarika by Nagarjuna.]

Lama Tsong Khapa praised the Buddha as an amazing teacher because he taught the essence of all - interdependence. The profound view of reality, that all phenomena are dependently arisen, is the essence of all. So Lama Tsong Khapa saw how Buddha Shakyamuni taught the principal point for the sake of all sentient beings, seeing that all phenomena in the realms of existence, do not exist in an independent way but in an interdependent way.

Realising this, Lama Tsong Khapa saw how Buddha Shakyamuni was amazing in his great compassion, in his infinite compassion. With his amazing skills, he taught the essence for the sake of all mother sentient beings.

This is to be taken as the essential instruction, the fact that all phenomena exist in an interdependent way. If we think about why this is so amazing, it's because the root of all our suffering in cyclic existence, is ignorance. Suffering exists in all different ways. There is a great variety of suffering. All of it has the same source, the same essential cause: that is ignorance.

Ignorance is confusion, a misconception of reality, or a misconception of self. Because of this, suffering arises.

There is, however, a way to get rid of suffering. That is by eradicating its cause, confusion.

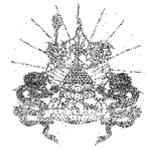
It is said that confusion can be eliminated by seeing. Seeing what? Seeing reality. Reality is that all phenomena are dependent, interdependent. This is also the meaning of emptiness. By knowing emptiness and interdependence, one is able to eradicate the root of all suffering. It is something that is possible. That's why Lama Tsong Khapa praised the Buddha as an amazingly kind teacher.

Lama Tsong Khapa is said to be Manjushri. Instead of speaking directly of emptiness, he spoke about relativity, a more subtle level of dependent origination. All phenomena exist in relation to something else. They all exist in dependence on something else. Therefore, there is not one phenomenon that exists in an independent way.

Knowing that phenomena exist in dependence on other phenomena, that they exist in relation to other phenomena, implies emptiness.

When we speak about interdependence and emptiness, we are also saying that this is the indivisibility of appearance and emptiness. Therefore, by realising emptiness one understands that all phenomena, without exception, exist in dependence on other factors. They exist in an interdependent way.

This is something that is essential. We should know that dependent origination and emptiness are of the same entity. This is the final reality of all phenomena.



We speak about two phenomena being of the same entity, e.g. a product and an impermanent phenomenon being of the same entity. What does this mean? It means that a product is impermanent and an impermanent phenomenon is a product. This is not difficult to understand. We know that being impermanent means a phenomena is changing moment by moment and that a product is produced by another factor - that is cause and effect. Therefore, it is easy to understand why a product is an impermanent phenomenon.

Now, to understand that dependent-arising and emptiness are of the same entity, is something that is essential. Why? Because by understanding this, the consciousness, (the mind) can cut the root of samsara. It is something difficult to understand; it's not easy at the beginning but if we persevere, with complete focus, we will achieve that understanding.

All Buddhist schools assert dependent origination but each school will have a different level of understanding of dependent origination. The only school that has a complete presentation of reality, is the Madhyamika Prasangika. Their method of presenting dependent origination is very specific. They say that other, lower schools speak about dependence in terms of cause and effect - how phenomena are the result of their own causes. This is causal dependence but most of these schools will assert that phenomena exist inherently, even though they depend on causes to give rise to a result! They persist in saying that phenomena exist in an inherent way. This shows a lack of understanding of interdependence.

Interdependence or dependent origination means that all phenomena, without exception, depend on something else to exist. Their existence depends on another. So there is nothing that can be presented as being independent or inherent. Therefore, it is said that the intelligent one will investigate that. 'That', means interdependence plus emptiness, the most subtle of all.

It is said that there is nobody like the Buddha who taught interdependence and emptiness. The Buddha taught the essence of all. The teaching of the Buddha shows the only way to get rid of samsaric suffering. He teaches disciples the only possible way to get rid of samsaric suffering - by realising interdependence and emptiness. Therefore, the intelligent one should check reality, should investigate. He/she will arrive at the same conclusion. There is nothing higher, nothing better than that.

Translator: Rinpoche is making a reference to the students who are studying *Abhisamayalamkara*:

Even though it is Madhyamika, *Abhisamayalamkara* presents the Svatantrika point of view. So you are not getting the actual reality at that point. You have to go to the study of Madhyamika Prasangika where the exact view is presented.

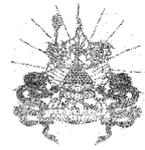
You know a lot of things. You have had a lot of education here.

Rinpoche is asking you a question: Can you show me something that is not existing in an interdependent way? Something existing in an inherent way?

(Someone speaks without a microphone.)

Can you show something that is existing but not independently?

[nobody is answering – you cannot show anything like that]



Chapter 18 "Investigation of Self and Phenomena"

18:1

If the aggregates were the self
It would have production and disintegration.
If it were different from the aggregates
It would not have the characteristics of the aggregates..

Self refers to imputed phenomena, that is called I or self.
Phenomena is what is the basis of designation of such a self, the aggregates and so forth.
It's about investigating the reality of the mode of existence.

First, we are speaking about the aggregates that are the basis of designation of the self; that is the designated object.

So, if both were to exist in an independent way, that would imply

- that they do not relate one to the other;
- that they do not depend on one another;
- that they are not dependently related.

What, then, would be the problem?

The first: if they were one inherently (the aggregates and self) what would be the fault?

We are speaking about the aggregates and the self.

If they were inherently one, identical, one entity, what would be the problem?

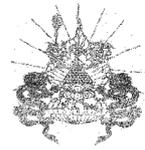
There are quite a few problems here because we are speaking about the five aggregates:

- 1-form, the body;
- 2-feeling, pleasant or unpleasant;
- 3-discrimination, distinguishing one object from another;
- 4-compositional factors, factors of all kinds;
- 5-consciousness, the main consciousness.

These are the five aggregates.

If the self were the five aggregates, if they were one, identical, we would have a few problems.

- The first one: because there are five different aggregates there would be five different selves.
- The second one: if the self is the aggregates - let's say, if the self is the body, one of the aggregates, then when the body is born, the self is born and when the body dies, the self dies.
At the time of the cremation of the body, we would be burning the self. 'I' would be burning when actually, it is the body that is burning.



- The third one: let's say the body is inherently identical with the aggregates. Again, we will take the first aggregate, the physical body. The body was born at one point, was produced, so the self was produced at that point and that will be the I. The body will be the I, me. When that body comes to an end at the time of death, then the I, the self, will die as well. It will come to an end also. There will be no past birth and no future birth.

We have many points which prove the fact of rebirth. So, there is a contradiction here - between self being one, identical with the body and rebirth.

We said that since beginningless time we have been reborn. Let's speak of our existence as being a true existence. We are existing truly. There is really an existing I and also a truly existing mine. "Mine" refers to the objects of experience of the I.

If that were the case, then there would be an I/self and aggregates. If I/self and the aggregates were truly, inherently existing, then they would have to be truly existing as one or truly existing as different. There is no other way.

We have already seen the faults of the self and the aggregates existing as inherently one. There were a few points mentioned above. So, we can conclude that the self is not inherently identical with the aggregates.

The next option is mentioned in the second part of the first verse:

18:1 cd

If it were different from the aggregates

It would not have the characteristics of the aggregates.

So, what would be the problem if the I/self were inherently different from the aggregates?

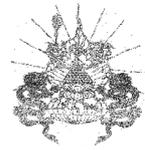
If the aggregates were inherently different from the self, it would mean that I/self would inherently exist on one side and the aggregates would inherently exist on the other side. They would be completely unrelated because of being inherently different. They are unrelated; they do not depend on each other; they do not rely on each other. So, what is the problem here?

The problem is similar to meeting someone. When you see the body of someone, you ask, 'Where are you from?' The reply - I'm from this place. I'm from this village. I'm a man. I'm a woman. I'm fine. I'm sick. I'm old. I'm young, etc.

By showing our body we answer with I, thinking of I. To this body, we put the label I. We can see that they are related. If they were unrelated we could not say 'I' when speaking of our body.

When we see the body of someone we say 'Tashi' or 'YesheTobgyal' or something. Actually, we are looking at the body of that person and we apply the name 'Tashi' to that person.

Rinpoche gives an example: Let's say I fly from India. Actually, it is not I, but my body, that flies from India to France, isn't it? But actually I say 'I' came here from India.



So we can see how, on the basis of the body, we fix the label I. We can see how they are related in this way. If you are travelling, going from one place to another, it's actually the body that is doing the travelling. It is not the I but we still say it is the I that is going, coming and so forth. We should say my body is going there.

If the I/self and the aggregates were completely independent and unrelated, in the sense of being inherently different, then it would be difficult. We would have to make a selection. For example, if you have a group of animals: goat, sheep, cow, yak, ox etc., and someone does not know the species of an ox, you could go through a process of elimination. You could say, this is a goat and remove it; this is a sheep and remove it, etc., until only the ox is left.

You could do the same with the aggregates: this is not I, it is the body; this is not I it is (another aggregate) and so on. By a process of elimination we would end up identifying the I.

Therefore, if we speak about something existing inherently, we should be able to find it. We should be able to point out that thing as inherently existing.

It's like the horn of a rabbit. If the horn of a rabbit existed, we should be able to point it out and say this is the horn of a rabbit but there is nothing that we can identify as the horn of a rabbit. It is the same with inherent existence. There is nothing that can be identified as inherent existence.

We are saying that the self and aggregates exist. But how do they exist?

As a person, we have the five aggregates. We have the body, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness. We exist in relation to these aggregates. So, there is a dependence between self/I and the aggregates. This is the way we actually exist. However, if we were to search for the self/I within the five aggregates, we would not find it anywhere. Yet they are related; there is a dependent existence between self and the aggregates.

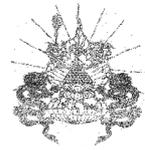
As a follower of Madhyamika Prasangika, we say that this body is not the I; this consciousness is not I; but the aggregates, body and consciousness, **are the basis of imputation for the I.**

So, we have the body and the consciousness. We say the body is not I. The consciousness is not the I/self. They are the basis of imputation for such a self.

Why do we say that the aggregates are not the self? Let's speak about the body. We say it is not the I. Why?

If we search within the body, we can start from the top of the head and go down to the soles of the feet but we will be unable to find the I. The head is just my head; it's not I, and so on, up to - my feet are not I; they are just mine.

So, we understand that by searching for the self within the body, one of the five aggregates, there is no way to find such a self. As is said by Shantideva (and later by Nagarjuna) this body is a combination of the six basic elements: earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness. This collection of elements forms the body.



Let's check. Let's search within these subtle elements. Is the I the earth element? No. Is the I/self the water (humidity) element? No. Is the I heat, the factor of fire? No. Can we find the I/self as wind energy? No. Then can we search in the element of space, which refers to the empty space within the body? Is it the I or not? It sounds strange to say that an empty space of the body would be the I. [Translator: That is why Rinpoche was laughing at the idea.]

Finally, the last element is consciousness. Is the I consciousness? No.

Let's speak now about the consciousness. We have seen that the I is not the body. What about the I in relation to consciousness or the mental aspect? There are five sense consciousnesses and one mental consciousness. We will start with the sense consciousnesses. Is the I/self the visual consciousness? No. Is the I the auditory consciousness? No and so forth.

If we search within the five sense consciousnesses we will not find the I/self.

It's a fact that those consciousnesses stop at the time of sleeping, so the I is not any one of those five sense consciousnesses.

Concerning consciousness, there are different levels: gross levels of consciousness, subtler levels of consciousness and the most subtle level of consciousness - for which you need to go to the level of tantra. Only in tantra there is the explanation about the levels of subtlety of consciousness clearly presented.

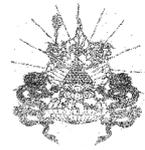
They speak about the grosser levels of consciousness. This includes all kinds of mental thinking, mental elaboration and conceptuality; it is quite heavy.

However, this gross level of thinking is not always present. For example, when we are falling asleep. When we are in the deeper part of sleep, mental conceptions no longer arise. So, if we faint or are in a coma, in the same way, those gross levels of mental consciousness, also stop. But at that time the I still exists. Therefore, we can see that the I is not this gross kind of mental consciousness.

Gradually, all these grosser levels of consciousness subside until only the subtle level of consciousness remains. When the subtle levels of the mind become latent, as though switched off, the only one which is left is the most subtle of all consciousnesses. That is the most refined level of consciousness that we can posit; this is usually called the primordial clear light. It is present all the time. It has been present from beginningless time and will continue forever. Even when one attains the state of Buddhahood, that subtle clear light consciousness is still there.

So, if we were to find the I within the aggregates, at least it should be that most subtle consciousness of clear light. That clear light is the most precious consciousness. That clear light is the one experiencing great bliss. That clear light is the one that we call the indivisibility of bliss and emptiness. That clear light is the one which has the potential to know all phenomena in an infinite way. It is something that is difficult to fathom. That clear light is the mind that becomes omniscient at the time of the result, when one achieves Buddhahood.

We all have that clear light, that most subtle consciousness. So, that's the final consciousness that we can find when we are searching. Therefore, that should be the I. But actually it is not the I; it is the basis of imputation for the I/self.



If that clear light were the I - on one side we are also speaking about the aggregates and if the I is existing in an independent, unrelated, truly existing way - but now, that most subtle, clear light consciousness is a continuum of moments of consciousness. From the previous moment comes the next moment of consciousness. There is a continuity of moments of consciousness, a non-stop continuity.

Therefore, if the I were that consciousness, which moment of consciousness would it be: the previous one? this one? the next one? The process is non-stop. Where will the I be? Which moment of consciousness will be the I?

Therefore, the more we investigate, the less we find.

In the end, we do not find an inherently existing I. It's unfindable.

Still, if we search we know there is an I/self that will become a Buddha, for example. So how does such a self exist? We cannot find it under analysis. Therefore, we cannot find it existing inherently but still that self exists. It exists in dependence on other factors. It's a dependently-originated phenomenon. It exists but not in an independent way. There is no way to find true existence in that self.

When we search for it, the only thing we find is emptiness of true existence.

That I is like an illusion. It is like an empty appearance. It does not exist inherently. There is no way to find an independent, unrelated self.

The more we investigate, the less we find such an inherently existing object. Therefore, the more we think about interdependence, the less we grasp at such an object. We have so much grasping at the concept of an inherently existing self that we hold to it very strongly. What happens when such an object, that we hold strongly, disappears? We are left with nothing. That will produce quite a great fear in a beginner.

However, on the other side, for the one who is really thinking about final reality, the one who is seeking final reality, the experience of understanding reality will be of great joy, pure joy, pure bliss.

On one side there is the notion of losing something, that precious possession that we were grasping. On the other side, there is pure bliss by understanding the final reality.

18:2 ab

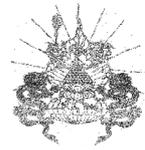
If there is no self

How could mine exist?

We were searching for an inherently existing I within the aggregates and outside the aggregates but we still do not find such an I. So, we conclude that there is no inherently existing I.

The next step is, what about all the other phenomena, such as my aggregates, the aggregates in general and all external phenomena that belong to the I?

We do the same analysis, searching in the same way. We will reach the same conclusion. We will not find any phenomena as inherently existing.



18:2 cd

Because of the pacification of the I and mine
There is no grasping at I or mine.

So, as we mentioned before, the conclusion is that an inherently existing I does not exist.

'Mine' means the object of experience of the I. Neither exist inherently. This is what the yogi finds by investigation and analysis. The yogi is the one searching for final reality. The yogi is the one who is cultivating an understanding of final reality. When that understanding arises in the yogi, that is peace - (referring to 'pacified' in line 1.)

Why? Because with that realisation he can get rid of the root of cyclic existence, ie confusion. Confusion will be destroyed. There will be no more circling. There is peace.

Remember when we speak about the root of samsara, we mean the first of the 12 links of interdependence, ignorance. This ignorance is a misconception of the self or the view of the transitory collection/aggregates. That being abandoned, there is no more circling in samsara.

If we check the text in Tibetan, the meaning implied is very subtle in all these words. It's quite difficult but if we think it is too difficult and give up, there is no way to understand reality. Therefore, it is important to study those words and presentations of final reality.

Then Rinpoche said: Well, actually, I am not the best one to do that here because you have a great program of study. You have Geshes and great people who know much more than me. I'm sorry that I cannot explain it very clearly.

Question:

'The unwise one is an agent. The wise one seeing suchness is not.' Verse 10; chapter 26

What does it mean that the wise one is not acting? Does it mean he is not acting when he has afflictions or does it mean that he is not acting, like being in a coma?

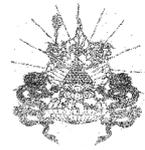
Rinpoche:

Here, we were talking about chapter 26 concerning the 12 links of interdependence. Rinpoche was explaining the two processes –

- i. the forward process of circling in samsara, with regard to someone who does not know the nature of reality, the unwise one.
- ii. the reverse process to stop circling in samsara, with regard to the wise one.

The difference between these two is that the unwise one does not know reality, due to ignorance. Thus, he produces karma/action that will propel him to the next rebirth. So the unwise accumulate propelling karma, while the wise, who know reality (interdependence and emptiness) do not produce propelling karma to produce rebirth in samsara.

The unwise one will be an agent, acting and producing karma, resulting in rebirth in samsara.



As Aryadeva says in the 400 Verses, for someone who has ignorance, the mere fact of starting to question reality - thinking that maybe things exist or do not exist in an inherent way - that very first thought against ignorance, shakes the ground of samsara.

Usually we speak about the Two Truths, the conventional and ultimate. Here the topic is about the ultimate truth. When we speak about conventional truth we are referring to phenomena that we can see directly and understand without going through any analytical process. But here we are speaking about the ultimate, the final reality of phenomena.

It is not something we can get just like that, just by looking at it or by thinking about it. It's not that easy. It's a gradual process, requiring checking, searching and analysing again and again.

So we have to make effort. Don't think it is something easy to get. Just listening to a few teachings is not enough. One should put effort into doing this kind of investigation again and again to be able to realise the final reality.

DAY 4 – Saturday 22nd November 2014

First we set the motivation. Our goal is the highest, final goal, the achievement of the state of Buddha, full enlightenment. For that purpose, we need to practice the Mahayana path. For that reason, we are listening to these teachings.

Lama Je Tsong Khapa was the one who showed the actual way to develop renunciation. He showed the essence in interdependence and emptiness. His 'Praise of Interdependence' is amazing. He praises Buddha Shakyamuni, who sees reality as it is. So, one who is able to realise that, knows exactly how things exist, the final reality. Such a one is able to teach disciples, teach sentient beings about that specific reality. Only a Buddha can do that. Due to his great compassion, Buddha gave these teachings on reality.

From the side of the disciple, we need to develop three wisdoms:

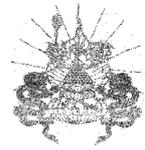
- ~ the wisdom arisen from listening;
- ~ the wisdom arisen from contemplation and
- ~ the wisdom arisen from meditation.

We are all experiencing suffering in this life. We know that all this suffering that we do not want, comes from the root of confusion, ignorance, the conception of a self.

Lama Tsong Khapa praises the Buddha, saying, you taught the way to get rid of that confusion by showing us reality. He praises the Buddha's teaching on interdependence, saying:

The mode of existence of all phenomena is that they are empty of inherent existence. They do not exist in an independent way. All phenomena in the realms of existence abide in such a way. They are empty of inherent existence and have always been so. This is an aspect which is completely natural. This primordial aspect pertains to all phenomena.

Together with this is the notion of dependent existence, which means that from a cause arises an effect. This is the systematic law of cause and effect; it is infallible. From a cause arises an effect, so this is dependent arising. This is factual reality.



Therefore we can see that these two are two aspects of the same reality. The absence of inherent existence and the fact that phenomena exist dependently. All phenomena arise in a dependent way and they are empty of inherent existence. One is showing the other; they are two aspects of the same factual reality.

Lama Tsong Khapa ends saying that this is a really amazing teaching. There is nothing higher that we can imagine. They are incredible.

Buddha Shakyamuni taught this reality of dependent arising and emptiness to sentient beings of this universe. It is really amazing. There is nothing better than this essential teaching. This is the best object to praise. These teachings are for the sake of sentient beings. It is the best way to help them. That is why Lama Tsong Khapa composed this Praise of Dependent Origination.

We can imagine all kinds of objects of praise. We can praise all kinds of things, such as the value of great jewels in the world but there is nothing to compare with dependent arising and emptiness. This is the supreme of the supreme objects. You might praise the qualities of body, speech and so forth but they are nothing compared to dependent arising and emptiness. They are the highest objects worthy of praise.

Yesterday, when speaking about why the self does not exist inherently, we concluded that there is not one atom of inherent existence in the self/ I. The next step, as is shown in the text, is to check the reality of mine. 'Mine' means my possession or my object of experience - the object of experience of such a self, the aggregates.

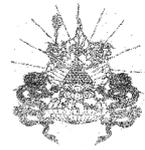
We will arrive at the same conclusion, that those phenomena do not exist inherently, either. This is natural. These are characteristics that exist in self and phenomena. This is how phenomena have always existed.

Now we might have this question: When we realise the non-inherent existence of the self, does one, simultaneously, realise the absence of inherent existence of mine/phenomena?

No, this is not the case. This does not happen at the same time. First one uses many lines of reasoning to check and investigate the self. Not finding the self, one realises the emptiness of inherent existence of the self.

Then, the next step will be to take 'mine' or phenomena, or the object of experience of the self, for investigation. Naturally, one will gain realisation that 'mine', those objects, do not exist inherently either. It does not happen simultaneously, yet one does not need to apply many lines of reasoning to realise the absence of inherent existence of the mine or my object of experience. This is the natural, next step of realisation.

Searching for the self, we do not find the inherently existing self, yet we say that the self has a certain way of existing. How does it exist? It's a designation, depending on its basis of imputation. What is the basis of imputation? It is the mind, the aggregates. What are the aggregates? They are a combination of those six elements. These are the bases of imputation of such a self.



18:3

Those who have no grasping at I or mine

Also do not exist.

Anyone who sees those who have no grasping at I or mine

Does not see.

The argument here is that the self and the aggregates exist inherently. Therefore, the yogi also exists inherently. One might have that kind of mistaken thought. However, the yogi does not exist inherently. Not even the smallest atom exists inherently. Therefore, the yogi refers to one who has directly realised the absence of inherent existence of all phenomena. The yogi who has realised that, does not exist inherently either.

We have a doubt, thinking, well, the one who has abandoned the wrong view of inherent existence, he must exist, surely? This is also erroneous because the consciousness that sees phenomena existing inherently is a mistaken consciousness. It is a consciousness that asserts something that actually does not exist, inherent existence. So, for the one who sees reality, that one, in the same way, does not exist inherently.

The notion of the negation of inherent existence is not something just invented by Buddha Shakyamuni. It is not something that suddenly happened; it has always been the basic reality for all phenomena. It is not that previously they were existing inherently, then suddenly the Buddha came and negated that, with the consequence that phenomena stopped existing inherently. That is not the case. It's not because the Yogi realises selflessness that phenomena become selfless. Selflessness is the basic reality of all phenomena.

18:4

When, with respect to inner and outer things,

The thoughts 'I' and 'mine' have been extinguished

Grasping will cease.

And by extinguishing that, birth is extinguished.

When one investigates the mode of existence of phenomena, the conclusion is non-inherent existence. This is the way to end the view of the transitory collection or the view of the transitory aggregates.

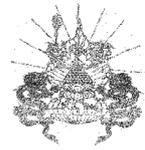
By stopping that, one terminates appropriation and stops taking rebirth in samsara.

What does it mean that the root of samsaric rebirth is the view of the transitory aggregates/ collection?

By eliminating that view, one naturally cuts the root so that there is no more appropriation/ birth in samsara.

Similar to destroying a tree, you cut the root. By cutting the root, systematically, the tree will die.

Lama Tsong Khapa says that for the one who does not know reality, regardless of what he is doing, whatever he is putting effort into, it will be the cause of suffering. The root problem is



the misconception of a self. That is, an innate misconception of the self - perceiving the self and the aggregates to exist inherently, as though the self existed outside the aggregates.

(18:4 line 3) Here, we are speaking about appropriation, which refers to attachment or attraction to four different objects:

1. Attraction to an object of experience of the self.
First there is grasping at the self, then the grasping at mental experiences, then attachment to the object of experience, such as visual forms, sounds, smells et cetera.
2. Appropriation of mistaken/incorrect views.
When we speak about the five wrong views, one of them is the view of the transitory collection, but here we are talking about the remaining four.
3. Attachment to a view involving all kinds of unethical or mistaken behaviour.
This includes ascetic practice carried out with a wrong motivation. For example, some people do animal sacrifice in order to achieve something, when actually, it is completely mistaken. The only result of killing others, is suffering.
4. Attachment to the view of the transitory collection.
That is afflicted knowledge. That is the root of cyclic existence.

When one appropriates these four factors, there is no way to achieve liberation. By knowing actual reality, by knowing selflessness/emptiness, one will bring an end to those appropriations, and thus end circling in samsara.

18:5 a

By extinguishing actions and afflictions, there is liberation.

Seeing reality means realising emptiness and dependent arising. With this realisation, one no longer takes birth in samsara. Here, both Karma and afflictions are mentioned as the cause. By stopping the cause there is no possibility of the result. Therefore, if you stop karma and mental afflictions, you are reversing the cycle. You can no longer enter the circle.

Due to the power of mental affliction, we produce karma. Propelling karma is the action which will project us into the next birth in cyclic existence. By stopping afflictions, naturally karma will not be produced and we will not have to experience the result of birth inside cyclic existence.

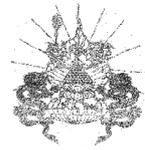
Mental afflictions are a mistaken consciousness, a confused consciousness. If we are able to eliminate that confused consciousness, there is no way to produce existence - the 10th of the 12 links, that produces birth in cyclic existence. If there is no birth there is no ageing, sickness or death. There is no suffering, including being born in samsara.

18:5 bcd

Actions and afflictions arise from misconceptions

And they arise from elaborations.

Elaborations will cease through cultivating emptiness.



This shows the origin of Karma and afflictions. Where does Karma come from? It comes from affliction. Affliction comes from conceptualisation. Conceptualisation here refers to the mistaken mind that superimposes a mistaken aspect to the object. For example, it is the kind of mistaken mental engagement that sees purity in an object which is impure; that perceives an object as permanent when, in fact, it is impermanent; that perceives pleasure, when in reality, it is suffering; that perceives a self when, in reality, it is selfless and the one that does not perceive the empty aspect of the object.

Here, we are speaking about the four mistaken perceptions that are the opposite of the four aspects of true suffering. First, we start with the mental engagement that is confused, that is inappropriate mental engagement which superimposes qualities that actually do not exist in the object.

Conception, in turn, arises from elaboration. Elaboration here, specifically concerns true existence. That conception of true existence, called elaboration, is the complete opposite of reality. It is a completely mistaken mind. The only way to eliminate that confusion is to apply reality. Reality is emptiness. That is why it is said that elaborations cease through emptiness. Emptiness is a fact, it is a reality that has the capacity to destroy this mistaken view of confused reality - perceiving things as truly existing.

We have two completely opposing consciousnesses. One is the conception of the self and the other is selflessness. They have two completely opposing ways of perceiving the self or conceiving phenomena. As a basis, we have the conventional existent phenomena - that is the object. The first consciousness, the conception of the self, sees that phenomena as existing truly. This is superimposing the quality of true existence on the object.

Now, the other mind, that consciousness is selflessness/wisdom. Knowing selflessness is checking reality, the mode of existence of phenomena. It knows the final reality of that phenomenon. That wisdom knows that that phenomenon does not exist as it is perceived by the conception of the self. It does not exist truly as perceived by the misconception of the self. That wisdom, knowing the absence of true existence, is the only one that is able to destroy the misconception of the self. Why?

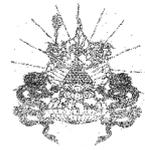
Because that wisdom sees that the object perceived by the misconception of the self, does not exist. It sees that the mistaken consciousness is false. It is obscured, therefore, by wisdom, one can get rid of the obscuration of that mind confused in terms of reality.

Only wisdom, that is the opposite way to perceive phenomena, is able to destroy the mistaken conception of the self. Knowing dependent arising, knowing emptiness, is the only way to get rid of such a mistaken consciousness. It is the perfect way, the complete way, to destroy the misconception of the self.

The last line of the verse is:

18:5 d

Elaborations will cease through cultivating emptiness.



Essentially, the meaning is that the wisdom realising emptiness together with dependent arising, is the one that will destroy the misconception of the self. There are two ways of interpreting this sentence.

With the Tibetan word 'gi', emptiness becomes the agent which destroys the misconception of the self.

The second way of interpreting it, is by putting 'la' (the locative) in place of 'gi'. In this case, it will be 'within' emptiness that the elaborations will cease.

In this context, 'within emptiness' refers to the innate, primordial clear light. That is the indivisibility of bliss and emptiness. Within this experience of emptiness, elaborations cease. This is how Kunnu Lama Rinpoche explained the sentence.

18:6

The Buddhas designated a 'self'.

They also taught 'selflessness'.

And they also taught

'Neither self nor selflessness exist at all'.

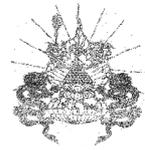
Here, Nagarjuna is answering a few objections, saying that there is no contradiction between the different elements.

Here are three views from different philosophical schools. For example, there are some schools that will say, you can do whatever you want. There is no future life. So you won't get a negative result, such as suffering. This means they are negating the law of cause and effect. Basically saying - because we do not see that, it does not exist. Whatever you do, it does not matter; there is no consequence.

To reverse this kind of mistaken view, to prevent people from doing whatever they want, e.g. harming others and acting in a negative way, the Buddha taught a self. He said that there was an inherently existing self. Therefore, it was for the sake of such people that he presented such a self, saying that there is a self, the one who carries the burden of the aggregates. That is quoted in the sutras but it was done for the specific purpose of stopping the wrong view that is harmful for oneself and others. To prevent people from being reborn in the lower realms, he presented the existence of an inherently existing self that is the carrier of the burden of the aggregates.

Buddha was teaching in a specific context for the specific needs of those people, knowing that, if he were to say to such disciples that there was no self - that such a self did not exist - then those disciples would fall into the extreme of nihilism/complete negation and would not respect the law of karma. By holding to such a self, the disciples would consider the laws of cause and effect. For that specific purpose, Buddha Shakyamuni taught the existence of an inherently existing self.

The first line shows Buddha asserting an inherently existing self, which was in that specific context.



The second line refutes such a self. This is for the other type of disciple, who is further along the path and who holds to the truth of karma; the one who is accumulating virtue/merit; The one who is working towards achieving liberation from samsara. For the sake of that disciple, the Buddha taught selflessness, the absence of such an inherently existing self.

The last two lines show the teaching of the Buddha for the highest of disciples, the supreme disciples. They have understood that all phenomena lack inherent existence; that there is no self existing inherently. They understand selflessness but these disciples would say, phenomena do not exist inherently; therefore, this is emptiness. But emptiness has to exist truly. So, to negate this, the Buddha taught the absence of true existence of emptiness itself. Emptiness, like any other phenomena, is a dependently originated/existing phenomenon. It does not exist in an independent way. It depends on other factors. It's related to other factors. So, emptiness does not exist inherently. It exists in a dependent way.

Rinpoche is telling a story: It is set in Tibet, around the Podrang in Lhasa. It seems there was a foreigner coming along; it might have been a Chinese communist. He came along very proud of himself. He arrived with all his presence saying, Ha ha! You Tibetans say there is no self and he laughed loudly. This was something crazy. Although this person was speaking Chinese Rinpoche could understand.

For a bodhisattva, clairvoyance is a must. Based on clairvoyance, one can really assist others. We are speaking about people who have bodhicitta. Their purpose is to serve others. Knowing the mind and thoughts of others is the best way to be able to help them. If you know exactly what is going on, you can assist them in this way.

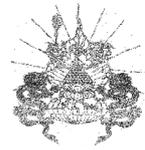
All these superpowers that are gained by the practice, are really useful. The perfect example of this is the Buddha. He knows the interests and the capacity of each person. He knows exactly what is needed in that context. So, that is why the Buddha gave a great variety of teachings. It was based on the specific needs of a disciple in a specific context.

Here we are not negating conventional existence of phenomena. Phenomena exist conventionally. If we are not investigating the final existence/reality of phenomena, then ordinary phenomena exist conventionally.

When we are searching for the reality of the mode of existence of such conventional phenomena, then we are searching for inherently existing phenomena; for truly established phenomena. We do not find anything. We do not find anything that exists inherently. The fact of not finding that is called the final reality. This is the ultimate truth. This is the truth that is perceived/realised by an Arya being during meditative equipoise. They realise the absence/emptiness of inherent existence of phenomena.

Therefore, we say that phenomena exist conventionally at the relative level. They exist as a dependent arising. They do not exist ultimately, in the sense that when one searches for them, one will not find anything that exists inherently.

Here, we are checking the final reality of phenomena, their mode of existence. We need to understand that it is not only by doing prayers that we can achieve that understanding. We need to read texts. We need to study. The next step, after studying, is contemplating and checking the mode of existence of phenomena. That is why we are studying this amazing text by Nagarjuna.



The way it is formulated is very condensed. The meaning is very subtle. There are many details I cannot explain here. However, you have Khen Rinpoche and the geshees that are here to teach you. So, you are really fortunate to have this amazing opportunity to study those texts and clarify your doubts.

Question:

When we were speaking about appropriation in verse four, in relation to 4 different objects, is appropriation referring to one of the 12 links? If it is the case, is it about the link 9 that is grasping at the time of death?

Rinpoche:

Within the 12 links, first is ignorance. Due to ignorance there is propelling karma, link number two. For propelling karma to give a result as rebirth, it needs to be activated by links number eight and nine, clinging and grasping. Then comes link number 10, existence or becoming. Then link number 11, birth. So, appropriation here, can refer to either number 10 or number 11. It can be taken as 'existence' - that is in the case of the appropriator, the one who is going to appropriate the aggregates. Alternatively, it can be understood as the result, birth. That is the appropriated aggregates. Therefore, it can be explained as the cause, appropriating the aggregates; or as a result, birth, that are the appropriated aggregates.

Then, we were speaking about the four appropriations. One was attachment in terms of the object of the senses, such as visible forms, sounds et cetera. Any kind of delusion or affliction that can arise due to the contact with this object. It can be attachment or other kinds of delusion.

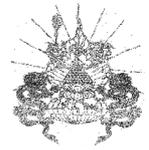
Another appropriation was to wrong views - four mistaken views, except the view of the transitory collection. Such as the view that negates the fact of cause and effect and so forth.

We stop here for today.

DAY 5 – Sunday 23rd November 2014

We start with a reference from Lama Tsong Khapa which, in essence, says that all phenomena exist in a dependent way. Phenomena arise due to causes and conditions; they rely on causes and conditions to exist. All phenomena exist in a dependent way. They exist in a relative way - in relation to something else or in dependence on something else. Earlier, we spoke of the emptiness of independent existence. Independent existence means being unrelated, not dependent on other factors. Here, however, we are referring to emptiness that is dependent arising/dependent existence. Emptiness reveals dependent arising. Dependent arising reveals emptiness. For sentient beings, there is nothing better to know than this.

There is not one existing thing that is not empty of inherent existence. Not even one atom exists inherently. This is a fact; it is natural. It is an aspect that has always been there. It is not that something suddenly appeared at one point. All phenomena have always existed without one particle of inherent existence.



Thus, Lama Tsong Khapa says, 'This comes from that.' All phenomena arise in dependence on something else. There is nothing inherent in them. There is a particular view from the Prasangika School which combines dependent arising of existence with emptiness of inherent existence.

The other philosophical schools, below Prasangika, maintain that if phenomena do not exist inherently, they do not exist at all. So they reach the mistaken conclusion that to exist, phenomena need to exist inherently.

For the Prasangikas, it is the opposite. They say that because phenomena do not exist inherently, they exist; they exist in a dependent way. So for the Prasangikas there is this mutual combination; one part feeds the other. Because phenomena are empty of an inherent nature, they exist interdependently. Because they are dependent arisings they are empty of an inherent nature. So they combine both aspects.

In the Heart Sutra, when it says, 'Form is empty. Emptiness is a form,' for the Madhyamika Prasangika, this is to be taken literally. It shows both aspects, form and emptiness. Emptiness is the absence of inherent existence. This relates dependent arising to emptiness. This interpretation applies only to the Madhyamika Prasangika. The words can be taken literally.

For the Sautrantrika, however, it is not possible for something to exist dependently and be empty. One cannot combine these two; they refer to something different.

The Heart Sutra continues, 'Form is not other than emptiness. Emptiness is not other than form,' in the sense that they all abide together. Appearance and emptiness exist together. They are not in different locations or in different contexts. It is not that emptiness exists somewhere and form/appearance exists somewhere else. They do not exist as different entities. Actually, both appearance and emptiness, are of the same entity but are different isolates - which means they have different names but are of the same nature.

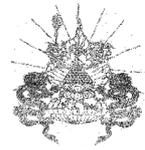
We go back to the text, 'Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way' by Nagarjuna.

This is the supreme among the philosophical treatises. It is very difficult to give a word-by-word explanation. We will be going through the text in a general way.

We are looking at the profound aspect of the path, the view. Buddha Shakyamuni gave many different teachings for different levels of disciple, including teachings for students of the highest level.

The continuity of the teachings, from Buddha to Nagarjuna, Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti, focused on this aspect - the profound view - which concerns the wisdom realising emptiness from the Madhyamika Prasangika point of view.

There are different lineages, all coming from Buddha Shakyamuni. One starts from Manjushri, going to Nagarjuna, Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti and so forth, showing the profound view. Another tradition, going through Maitreya, (with his five great treatises) etc, shows the vast aspect of the teaching. This concerns the method - practices such as confession and bodhicitta etc.



More specifically, within that, there is the lineage of instruction or the practice for training, which refers to the way to develop bodhicitta with different methods. For example, there is the method of developing bodhicitta in seven points (six causes and one effect), plus another method of equalising and exchanging self with others. This is the main practice described by Shantideva.

There is also the tradition of tantric practices. All these traditions are sourced in the very same teaching, the words of Buddha Shakyamuni.

In our context, we are studying the first of those traditions, the profound view. Without the profound view, there is no way to achieve liberation from samsara. Without the wisdom of emptiness, there is no way to achieve full enlightenment. Of course, to achieve Buddhahood, we need bodhicitta but we cannot do that without wisdom realising emptiness.

Wisdom realising emptiness, the profound aspect of the teaching, is presented in the sutra as well as in the tantra. In our context, we are speaking of the sutric presentation of wisdom.

18:7

Something which can be expressed is rejected

Since objects of experience of the mind are rejected.

The nature of reality is neither produced nor ceases.

It is similar to nirvana..

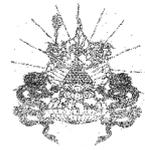
The first line is speaking on the ultimate level. Ultimately, there is nothing that exists truly. There is nothing that exists in an independent, intrinsic way. If there were something that existed in such a way, then Buddha Shakyamuni would have mentioned it. It says that we were not taught about it but, in fact, there is nothing that has been taught about ultimate existence in terms of true existence.

The meaning of the first line is that Buddha did not mention any final existence because there is no such thing as phenomena existing ultimately.

In the same way, ultimately, if we search for the reality of phenomena, we cannot find anything. There is no object, no locus to be found under final analysis. That is why it is said there is no object of the mind. Here we are speaking about phenomena, more specifically about products - impermanent phenomena. Regarding them, it is said that they are unborn, unceased. Why?

It is not refuting conventional existence. Conventionally, these products arise, abide and cease. That is their function. 'Ultimately' means inherently or by way of their own characteristics. They do not arise inherently; they do not exist inherently; they do not cease inherently. Therefore, there is no such inherent arising, abiding and ceasing.

When we speak about the final reality of phenomena, their absence of inherent existence, this is what is referred to as suchness. It is said to be like nirvana, meaning, that for one who has gained liberation, final reality is known (the fact that phenomena do not exist inherently and so forth).



18:8 ab

Everything is real. Everything is non-real.

There is the real and the non-real.

This is quite complicated. Ultimately, not one phenomenon exists inherently. Here, we are speaking about emptiness as the final reality of phenomena. What is shown here is the way Buddha Shakyamuni teaches disciples of different capacities. He presents the gradual process of teaching.

Let's start with the beginner. First, one has to make the disciple develop faith and trust in his teaching. Thus, he starts teaching with things that the beginner knows. He speaks about the aggregates, the sense spheres and all the phenomena that the disciple can accept. So, what the Buddha teaches is based on the knowledge of the beginner. The first part of line one, says that phenomena are real.

The next step concerns the disciple who is a bit more advanced. He/she has faith in the Buddha and trusts the words of the Buddha. On this level comes the second part of the first line. 'Phenomena are not real.' In which sense are they not real?

Specifically, the Buddha is saying that products change moment by moment. Therefore, there is a momentary disintegration. Phenomena are not real in the sense that they are not permanent. At this point Buddha is teaching the impermanence of phenomena.

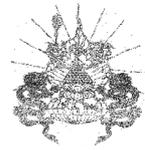
The next line says, 'Both real and not real'. So we are going to the next step. This is for disciples who have accepted the impermanence of phenomena. For them they need to know more. Here, 'Both real and not real' shows two perspectives: firstly the perspective of the ordinary person - what is perceived, such as the ordinary environment and the sentient beings living within it. They know that these phenomena come from causes and conditions, yet within that perspective, they exist truly; they are real.

However, from the perspective of an arya being, who is in meditative equipoise realising emptiness, he/she sees final reality. For an arya, phenomena do not exist inherently. They know that one cannot find truly existing phenomena. This is the meaning of 'both real and not real'.

18:8 c

There is neither the real nor the non-real.

This refers to one who still has an innate tendency to grasp at true existence, someone who superimposes true existence on phenomena. For this disciple, the Buddha said, if you check phenomena, you will realise that they are disintegrating moment by moment. Therefore, they do not exist by way of their own entity. However, one can actually see or experience these phenomena that change moment by moment. This means they are not non-existent. They do not exist by way of their own entity but also, they are not not-existing at all, either.



18:8 d

Those are the subsequent stages taught by the Buddha.

This shows us how the Buddha leads disciples from the very basic to the highest levels of understanding. It is analogous to going to school, attending different classes and stages.

18:9

Not known through others, pacified,
Unelaborated by elaborations,
No discursive thought and not a different object.
Those are the characteristics of suchness.

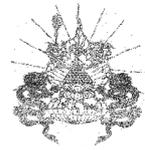
The first part refers to someone who directly realises emptiness, and arya being, a superior being. That person can try to explain it to another person but he/she cannot express emptiness as it is. It is inexpressible. There is no way to explain the direct experience of emptiness with words. It has to be experienced by oneself directly in order to be understood. It cannot be understood through conceptuality, names, labelling or language.

For example, to be able to know sweetness, you need to experience it first-hand. If you don't taste it, words will not be able to describe that taste exactly. The experience of emptiness is free from elaboration. Here, we are speaking about the time of direct realisation of emptiness. The mind is not wandering. There is no conceptualisation. The mind is just abiding in the experience.

In the Prasangika texts, we mention the example of someone who has problems with eyesight, such as cataracts. They see hair falling in space in front of them. Someone who does not have cataracts, knows there is no such falling hair. He/she can say, there is no such falling hair. For the other person, it is theoretical knowledge. He/she does not know by him/herself that there is no falling hair. Only when that person has recovered from the eye problem, can he/she realise the absence of hair falling in space.

We are speaking of knowledge in terms of one's own experience. One might understand but if we do not have the experience of the absence of falling hair, we cannot know that absence. It is the same with emptiness. Only with first-hand experience, can we know exactly what emptiness is. Even though it can be described, it will never be expressed as it is, in direct experience. In that sense, it is inexpressible.

Not differentiated - refers to the fact that when one knows the emptiness of one phenomenon, one will know the emptiness of all phenomena. Why? Because emptiness is not differentiated in the sense that emptiness is the same for all phenomena.



18:10

That which arises in dependence upon something
Is, for example, not that thing itself
Nor is it different from it.
Thus, it is not annihilated and not permanent.

Here we are speaking of the relation between cause and effect. They do not exist truly. If they were to exist ultimately, they should exist ultimately as one or different. If they were to exist ultimately as one, that would mean that the cause, the agent, would be the result.

If that were not the case, they should be ultimately different. In this case, the cause and the result would be of a completely different nature. In terms of cause and effect, we cannot accept that they are unrelated because we can see quite obviously how there is a relation between cause and effect. Without a cause there is no result. Neither can we say they are permanent. We cannot say they are inherently different and we have to accept that they depend one on the other and that there is a continuity between the cause and the effect.

18:11

Suchness is the nectar of the teachings
Of the Buddhas who are the protectors of the world.
It is not the same, not different,
Not annihilated and not permanent.

In the first line we read that Buddha is the refuge and infallible protector of all sentient beings.

The second line refers to the holy Dharma (essentially to dependent arising) as being a nectar of immortality. Due to this holy Dharma, one can bring an end to ageing, sickness and death. All suffering can be eliminated by applying the sublime, immortal nectar.

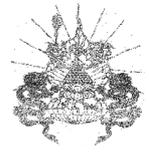
The third line refers to the homage at the beginning of the text, reminding us of the mode of existence of all phenomena. They do not fall into the extremes of permanence or annihilation; they do not exist inherently. This is the mere, natural reality. One can know this only by practising and cultivating the wisdom shown by the Buddha.

How do we cultivate that knowledge? As is said in the Precious Garland by Nagarjuna, we should look for the I/self. We should search within our aggregates. We start with the body. We have a physical, functioning body. Where is the I in relation to the body? The I exists in relation to the six elements.

Is that I in the earth element? No. Is the element of water that I? No. Is heat, fire that I? No.

We check with wind and space. Are the cavities of space in our body that I? No. We do not find the I. What is left? Consciousness. So we search for the I in the consciousness. We do not find the I as the consciousness. We can see the consciousness is not I.

This is what we should do. We should carry out such checking ourselves, checking the mode of existence of such an I. What is that I? How does it exist? By searching, we will gain



conviction that I exists in relation to the aggregates. The I/self is not independent of the aggregates but is related to them. We should meditate on checking that I within the aggregates. We do this analysis again and again. The more we meditate in this way, the more the ignorance and confused conception of the self will decrease. The mind will be much more relaxed. There will be less fear. There will be fewer gross thoughts in terms of the I.

In the past, when we did not check the I, it seemed very solid and omnipresent.

Based on the strong notion of the I, we feel the need to protect it and because of that, we have a biased relation with the world; attachment to some; anger and hostility to others. Based on this confused view or reaction, all suffering comes into being.

The more we do this analytical meditation, the more all these tendencies, based on such a solidified self, will decrease. This solid I cannot be found. It is not real. So what is I? What is the person? Of course, it is something related to the six elements but we cannot find such a person, such an I within those six constituents. Not finding such a solid I, it becomes like an illusion. So when we move around we should remember that that I does not exist inherently; it is like an illusion in the sense that it does not exist as it appears to the confused consciousness.

In general, there are many lines of reasoning that can be used to assert emptiness, the final reality of phenomena. There is the reasoning which searches for the inherently existing I as one or different; there is searching based on the four possible ways of production etc. Amongst all those lines of reasoning to prove the emptiness of inherent existence, the essential one is the proof by dependent origination.

This is the essential line of reasoning that has been used by Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti and, Lama Tsong Khapa, for example. It says that phenomena are empty of inherent existence because they exist dependently. There is dependent origination which in Tibetan, is represented by two syllables, *ten* [ten] ཅེན་ and *'byung* [jung] ཅེན་.

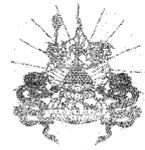
ten ཅེན་ implies that when you search, you will not find any ultimately, existing phenomena.

They exist on the basis of something; they are dependent on something; they rely on something.

'byung ཅེན་ is the fact that they arise/exist. It exists in dependence, on reliance on something else.

If we check, we can see that all phenomena exist in such a way. All phenomena exist in dependence on something else. For example, the person exists in dependence on the aggregates. You cannot find an independent person, a person that is not related to the aggregates.

Using the reasoning of dependent arising to prove the emptiness of inherent existence of phenomena, is something very powerful. Therefore, when we investigate the reality of phenomena, we should use this line of reasoning from the very beginning.



18:12

When perfect Buddhas have not appeared
And also Hearers have disappeared
The exalted wisdom of Solitary Realizers
Will fully arise without reliance.

This is the last verse of the 18th chapter. We know that dependent-arising/emptiness is the nectar that will free us from suffering. It will bring us to the state of liberation from samsara. To obtain such a state we need to meditate, cultivate that wisdom. By developing that wisdom, we will definitely achieve liberation and even the highest enlightenment of a Buddha. But it might not happen in this life. If it does not happen in this life, we will continue in future lives until finally achieving such a goal.

Through our familiarisation with the meditation on dependent arising and emptiness, there is no doubt that we will achieve the state of liberation and Buddhahood.

The ideal would be to find a teacher in a future life to introduce us again to emptiness, in order to continue developing the wisdom of emptiness. However, there is no guarantee that we will meet such a teacher. It is said in one of the commentaries that we might have a life without the presence of a Buddha, a teacher or guru. In that case, we might wonder what will happen. It is said that even though we might not have the presence of a teacher or guru to guide us, still, due to the familiarity that we built up in this life time, we will definitely gain that wisdom of emptiness in the future as a Pratyeka Buddha.

So, even though we may not find a teacher in a future life, we may not need one because we may be able to achieve it by ourselves alone. This is guaranteed. It is definite that we will reach liberation.

As Aryadeva says in '400 Verses',

'For the one who has no merit, there is no questioning of reality.'

Reality refers to dependent arising and emptiness. If at one point, a doubt arises, even the question - is it so that phenomena exist inherently? Do they exist really, truly? Just that very first questioning moves the ground, shaking the solidity of samsara.

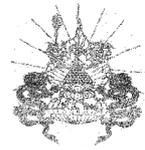
Question:

I have trouble remembering the Lamrim. What can I do to improve this?

Rinpoche:

The Lamrim is very big. You need to apply the three wisdoms: reading, contemplating and meditating.

In the case of monks and nuns in the monasteries, we do debate. With debating, it is impossible to forget. It is an excellent method for remembering what we have studied. If you do not have the opportunity to debate, then develop studying, contemplating and meditating.



Take a topic and study, contemplate, meditate. In this way you gradually build up your memory of it. With this method, the subject becomes integrated with your mind and you cannot forget it.

The essential part is to contemplate liberation; that is the essence of Buddha's teaching. He is showing us the way to obtain freedom from cyclic existence. Not only that, we can also obtain omniscience.

So, it is important first to develop the conviction that it is possible to reach that state, free from samsara; it is achievable.

What is that state of freedom from samsara? It is true cessation, the third of the four noble truths. This is a fact. We all have the potential of Buddha-nature to achieve liberation from cyclic existence and to reach complete Buddhahood. With that conviction, one develops enthusiasm in the wish to apply the method to obtain such a result, as is shown in the stages of the path.

Question:

For ordinary people, how can we practice emptiness on a daily basis?

Rinpoche:

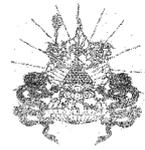
This type of meditation is analytical, so it is not a meditation that you only do when you are sitting on a cushion. It does not have to be formal. It can be observation and checking of whatever you are doing during the day. It is something to be done again and again. One needs to develop familiarisation with the method.

Whatever is happening, you check the mode of appearance of what appears to you. There is a point, when, even in dreams, you lose the notion of true existence. The more you observe and investigate, the more you realise that phenomena are like an illusion or a mirage. They do not exist as they appear. Then gradually, you will perceive less of the aspect of true existence; you will perceive the absence of true existence and you will perceive phenomena as illusory, even in dreams. Thus, you will remain in meditation on emptiness both day and night.

By rubbing two pieces of wood together, we can make fire. It is not a case of rubbing for a while and then putting it aside, waiting a bit and then starting again. You will not manage to start a fire in that way. You have to do it continuously. It is the same with this meditation. It has to be performed continuously.

It is possible to achieve the result as it is a quality of the mind which has the capacity to develop, an amazing capacity. Not only that, this meditation has the support of valid cognition. It's concords with reality. Therefore, by doing this medication again and again, we will develop familiarisation and we will achieve the result.

Of course, sometimes our mind will be agitated. A great way to cool down the mind is to look at representations of the Buddha - statues or paintings. Another way, is to read or listen to teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Study his teachings. In that way, while we are studying the Dharma or looking at the Buddha, there is no possibility for anger to arise. So that is a good trick to use.



DAY 6 – Monday 24th November 2014

We start with setting our motivation. Our goal is to reach supreme enlightenment, the state of Buddhahood, for all sentient beings. For this purpose, we shall be listening to these teachings from the Mahayana class of teachings.

We begin by referring to the words of praise to the Buddha by Lama Tsong Khapa.

The teaching is about interdependence. All phenomena exist in a dependent way. They exist in reliance on others, in relation to others. That dependence is related to emptiness. The best way to understand this is by listening, contemplating and meditating. There is nothing better to do than this.

By contemplating, by using the correct reasoning of dependent arising to prove emptiness, it will be impossible to fall into the two extreme views: the extreme of permanence and the extreme of annihilation.

This is exactly the Middle Way, free from those two extremes. This reasoning is infallible.

The fact that the Buddha taught dependent arising is something that is incredible. It is really amazing. The Buddha was an exceptional teacher who gave such a wonderful teaching.

If we search for a better reason to describe the reality of phenomena, we will not find anything more correct or superior to the teaching of dependent arising.

23:1

Attachment, hatred and confusion

Are said to arise from misconceptions.

They originate in dependence upon

The pleasant, the unpleasant and the mistaken.

This verse deals with the mental afflictions that do not exist inherently. The bases of afflictions are the three poisons - desire, aversion and ignorance.

In the Tibetan text, there is a pluraliser which acts to include all the other afflictions. They all arise from thought or conceptualisation. This refers to improper mental focus or improper mental engagement. This has been spoken by the Buddha.

We speak about the three poisons in terms of mental afflictions. We can divide them into the six root mental afflictions, the twenty secondary afflictions etc., but in short, we can combine them within three categories - desire/attachment, aversion/hostility, ignorance/confusion.

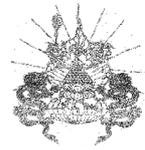
Within these three, we can include all the other mental afflictions.

Why do we call them poisons? Because they are the poisons that produce our sufferings.

How does an affliction arise, based on improper mental engagement?

In the last part of the first verse, it says that they arise in dependence on the attractive, the unattractive and the mistaken.

For example, in the case of an object that we perceive as attractive or pleasant, in reality, the attractive quality may be only one percent but then we exaggerate that quality by 99%. There



is a kind of superimposition or exaggeration of the object's positive quality. Based on that, desire/attachment will arise.

In the case of the second one, unattractive or unpleasant, the object might be 1% faulty, ugly or whatever. Then we exaggerate that 1% to make it 99%. This is what is called improper mental engagement. Based on that exaggerated perception, we develop hostility or aversion.

His Holiness often mentions Aaron Beck, an American psychiatrist, who did investigation into consciousness and behaviour. He said that when there is an exaggeration of the quality of an object or person, the distortion of the mind is about 99%. There is a 99% exaggeration of the specific quality of the object, either positive or negative. Based on that exaggeration, afflictions arise, such as desire or aversion.

This discovery is concordant with Buddhist teachings, that first, there is an improper mental focus, which exaggerates the quality, and then, based on that, the afflictions arise.

23:2

Those which arise in dependence upon
The pleasant, the unpleasant and the mistaken
Do not exist through an own essence.
Thus, afflictions are not real.

When we speak of this improper mental focus that exaggerates negative or positive qualities, it is a mistaken mind. It involves a distortion of reality; it perceives reality in a mistaken way. For example, let's speak about desire for the body, the form aggregate. There is a mistaken perception of the body as being pure, when in reality, we know the body is impure.

In terms of the aggregates - body and consciousness, there is a perception of them being happy, when actually, we know that the aggregates are suffering in nature.

There is a perception of the aggregates as being permanent, when we know that the body is impermanent; we can see the process of ageing.

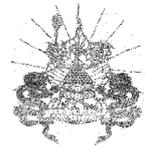
There is a mistaken perception of the aggregates existing inherently or intrinsically, when actually, they do not exist in an inherent way.

Consequently, there are two opposing consciousnesses. On one side we have a confused, mistaken consciousness. On the other side we have the correct, unmistaken consciousness. They are complete opposites - one counteracts the other.

On one side, we have confusion that perceives reality in a distorted way. That mistaken consciousness, that improper mental engagement, perceives the object in a false or distorted way. It perceives phenomena existing inherently. This kind of mistaken consciousness is not supported by reality. Therefore, it can be cleared away; it can be eliminated.

How do we clear away such a confused consciousness?

By using the opposite - wisdom - the one which knows reality; the one which is not mistaken; a mind that accords with reality. This mind cannot be destroyed because it is backed up by



valid cognition; it is concordant with reality. Therefore, it has the power to eliminate a mistaken mind.

The afflictions that arise due to the mistaken consciousness, can be eliminated by correct wisdom or unmistaken consciousness.

At the basic level, we identify the mistaken consciousness that is distorting reality; it will disappear as soon as one applies the correct mind that checks and analyses reality. By analysing reality, naturally that mistaken mind will disappear.

Mental afflictions are easily destroyed, meaning that by applying the antidote, it is easy to eradicate them. Why? Because they are weak. They are weak in the sense that they do not accord with reality. Therefore, the mere knowing of reality is able to destroy such weak mental confusion that is the basis of mental afflictions.

23:3

The existence or non-existence of the self
Has not been established in any way.
Without that, how could the existence
Or non-existence of the afflictions be established?

In the first part, we are speaking about the self. A self that exists inherently has already been refuted. Therefore, the mental afflictions that are related to such a self cannot exist inherently either.

Mental afflictions are a confused consciousness. It is based on perceiving the object as existing inherently. This is why there is confusion. It is due to the conception of inherent existence of its object.

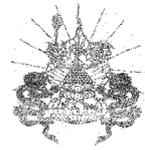
Therefore, as we have seen, by knowing that the self does not exist inherently, then naturally, we can understand that the afflictions do not exist inherently either.

Usually, in the Madhyamika system, we speak first of identifying the object of negation. In terms of the object of negation, it can be explained in relation to the path or in relation to logic.

In terms of logic, we speak about two objects of negation. One is in terms of the object of consciousness. The other is about what we call the object-possessor. This refers to the consciousness. So, there is an object of negation in terms of the object as well as the consciousness to be known. We speak about the consciousness and the object.

Here, the consciousness is the mental affliction. The mental affliction is an object of observation.

In the Lam Rim, it says that the object of observation has never existed inherently. It has always lacked inherent existence. The object of negation (being the object of the consciousness) can be of any kind. It can be the self, any of the aggregates or any other phenomenon. Any object which is taken by the consciousness has never existed in a separate, independent way.



It is not possible for any phenomenon to exist in a non-dependent way.

Next, we speak of the object of negation as the consciousness. In this case, it will be an afflicted consciousness. As is said in the Lam Rim, it is also an object of negation. The afflicted mind is a confused or mistaken consciousness. Why? Because it perceives the object as existing. In other words, something that does not exist is perceived as existing (as being an existent phenomenon). It is perceived like this owing to a mistake of the consciousness. It's about a mistaken perception.

Now, it is not about the object being mistaken but about the consciousness that perceives it in a mistaken way. It can be counteracted by an opposing analysis on the ultimate nature - the wisdom realising emptiness. That will realise the mistaken conception of afflictions, in terms of perceiving their object in a mistaken way.

Why? Because if such an object were to exist, as perceived by the affliction, wisdom should be able to find it under analysis. However, this is not the case. Therefore, we realise that the afflictions are mistaken in terms of their perception of an object.

23:4

Moreover, an owner of those afflictions

Has not been established.

Without any owner

Owned afflictions cannot exist.

Here, we are searching for the basis of the afflictions. What is the basis? The support for these afflictions is the self. As we have seen before, the self does not exist truly so, the afflictions do not exist truly either.

It can be compared to a drawing on the wall. If there is no wall, there is no possibility of having a drawing on the wall.

In the same way, if there is no self that is the support for the afflictions, there is no possibility of having afflictions. Therefore, we are speaking about the basis, which is the self that does not exist truly.

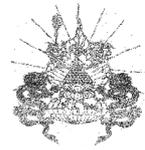
Mental afflictions are related to their object and occur at a certain time and in a certain location or context. If we check these three aspects in relation to afflictions, none of them can be grasped or be conceived as existing inherently.

The object of observation of afflictions does not exist inherently.

Time does not exist inherently. There is past, present and future but none of them exist inherently. The context or location does not exist inherently either.

Nothing in relation to the mental afflictions can be conceived as existing inherently.

If we check in this way, we can easily conclude that afflictions do not exist inherently. Nothing that is related to the afflictions, the basis and so forth, exists inherently. Therefore, there is no way that the afflictions exist inherently.



Although we have accepted the object of observation of the afflictions, when we check we do not find it; it does not exist inherently.

But we might say, well there is the mind. So the mind, the consciousness, is something that exists inherently. Now we will refute that assertion of an inherently existing consciousness.

23:5

Just as in viewing one's own body

Afflictions do not exist in the afflicted in the five ways.

Just as in viewing one's own body

The afflicted does not exist in afflictions in the five ways.

We are dealing with the view of the transitory collection as being the root of samsara. This is a mistaken view, conceiving inherent existence. When we check whether the view of the transitory collection concords with reality, we will find nothing that is real; nothing exists really, as it seems to be.

By not finding the object, as perceived by the transitory collection, we conclude that this view is a mistaken one.

Now, if we speak about mental afflictions, there are afflictions and afflicted consciousnesses. So, in the same way, if we check the reality of the consciousness, the mind that is afflicted, we will search for its reality but in the end, we will not find anything substantial.

Thus, we reach the conclusion that it does not exist as it appears i.e. inherently.

Previously, we have been checking the mode of existence of the conception of the self (in this case, the view of the transitory collection) and we have concluded that the view of the transitory collection, the conception of a self, does not exist inherently. It is not inherently one with nor different from its bases. It is not the basis; it is not the possessor and so forth.

Previously, in the text, one is supposed to have done all this checking in different steps and to have realised that the conception of the self is mistaken.

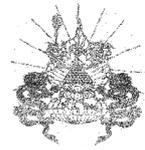
Next, we apply the same logic to the mental afflictions, applying the same five steps of checking.

As is said by Chandrakirti in *Entering the Middle Way*: 'the fault of all comes from the mental afflictions'. All suffering that we experience, from birth to death, including ageing, sickness and so forth, comes from the afflictions.

Where do these mental afflictions come from? They come from the view of the transitory collection, the conception of the self.

Now, if you search for the conception of the self, you will realise it is a mistaken consciousness. There is no such self as apprehended by the conception or the view of the transitory collection.

When you are not analysing, there is a self existing conventionally; there is a self that is functioning. But if you search for and analyse its final mode of existence, it is impossible to



find anything. That is one conclusion in terms of the view of the transitory collection or the conception of the self.

In terms of the object, that is apprehended by such a consciousness, you will not find such an object. When you search for it, you will not find it because it is a non-existent. The same kind of analysis that you have been using for the conception of a self and for the self that is the object of that conception, can be used for the afflictions or the afflicted consciousness. In the same way the afflicted consciousness will disappear.

23:6

If the pleasant, the unpleasant and the mistaken
Do not exist through an essence
Then any afflictions in dependence upon the pleasant,
The unpleasant and the mistaken also do not.

This is quite similar to what has gone on before but here it is showing that what is perceived by improper mental engagement, such as the three aspects - attractive etc, - does not exist intrinsically. If these aspects do not exist inherently, how can mental afflictions exist inherently?

Because the affliction exists in dependence on the pleasant aspect (for example) of the object that is perceived, such a pleasant aspect does not exist inherently. Therefore, what is related to it - the affliction arisen from perceiving it - does not exist inherently either.

Then we might say, afflictions exist inherently because the object of observation, that is any of the six objects of consciousness, such as visual form and so forth, exists inherently.

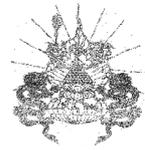
If its object of observation exists inherently, then the consciousness, which here, is the afflicted consciousness, has to exist inherently as well.

23:7

The six types – visual forms, sounds, tastes,
Tactile objects, odours and phenomena –
Are considered to be the basis of attachment,
Hatred and confusion.

Here, we are shown the six objects of the six consciousnesses, such as visual form, sound et cetera. All these objects are the cause for afflictions to arise. These objects are observed by consciousness. If the consciousness perceives the object as attractive, then desire arises. If the consciousness perceives its object as unpleasant, then aversion arises. If the consciousness perceives its object as a mistake, then confusion will arise. When these six objects of the six consciousnesses are perceived in a specific way, then afflictions arise.

Again, we are speaking about exaggeration. Exaggerating the attractive aspect will give rise to attachment. Exaggerating the unpleasant aspect of the object will give rise to aversion. We can see that this process does not accord with reality. It is false. The perception of the object



is not concordant with reality. Therefore, it is mistaken. We can now understand how afflictions are mistaken consciousnesses and how they do not exist inherently.

23:8

Visual forms, sounds, tastes, tactile objects,
Odours and phenomena are merely designated.
They are like a city of Gandharvas
And similar to a mirage and a dream.

This shows that the six objects of consciousness do not exist inherently. They only exist in dependence on others, in a dependent way. As such, they do not exist inherently.

Then the question is - if those six objects of experience of the consciousness, do not exist inherently, how can afflictions arise by perceiving any of these six objects?

The answer is that even though they do not exist inherently, they appear as existing inherently, like the cities of gandharvas, like mirages and dreams. They appear even though they do not exist inherently. We can see that the object appears and is perceived by that mistaken consciousness.

For example, with a mirage, water appears; whereas actually, there is no water.

Rinpoche was saying that at one time he was in America. He does not remember the place that he took a picture of what he could clearly see as water against the mountain. It really looked like water but it was only a mirage.

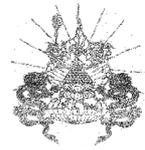
A city of gandharvas is not so familiar to us. It concerns entities that have very subtle bodies that we cannot perceive.

There is another story which Rinpoche heard, concerning Tibet. He was in Norbu Linka and there was a Chinese man working there. He was not the type of person who told lies and invented stories. He said that at one time he was at some place when he met a friend, who had died, driving a car. It might have been a spirit. They drove around and went to a village. They even went to a hotel and ate. Later on, he realised that there was no such village and that the hotel did not exist. It seems to be like something that they call the city of gandharvas. It appears but actually does not exist.

23:9

Also how could the pleasant and the unpleasant
Arise with respect to those
Which are like an illusory person
And similar to a reflection?

Again, we are dealing with the six objects of experience of consciousness that are said to be like ghosts or illusory beings. They are like a reflection, in the sense that they do not exist



inherently. Perceiving something pleasant or unpleasant on an object cannot exist inherently either. If objects do not exist inherently, it is not possible for its aspect (pleasant or unpleasant) to exist inherently either.

Therefore, if the cause does not exist inherently, how can the affliction (desire, aversion) that arises from it, exist inherently? If the cause does not exist inherently, it is not possible for the result to exist inherently.

23:10

Something is designated 'pleasant'

In dependence upon the unpleasant.

And since that does not exist without reliance upon the pleasant

The pleasant is inadmissible.

When we speak about something being attractive or pleasant, it is pleasant only in relation to its opposite, the unpleasant. If the notion of unpleasant did not exist, it would not be possible to posit pleasant.

Attractiveness depends on unattractiveness to exist. The opposite is also true, in the sense that the unpleasant aspect cannot exist without the existence of the pleasant aspect. The idea is one of mutual dependence; one is related to the other. One cannot exist without the other.

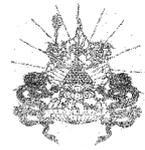
What is being presented here is that the pleasant aspect of something which produces afflictions, does not exist independently, without depending on something else.

It is the same when we speak about long and short. Each depends on the other. There is a mutual dependence. His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives the example using fingers. If you look at the ring finger, for example, it is neither long nor short. However, if you compare it with the little finger it will be longer. If you compare it with the middle finger it will be shorter. Whether a finger is long or short depends on its relation to other fingers.

We can consider a grain of wheat. Is it a cause or an effect? We cannot simply say one or the other. That grain of wheat is the cause for its future existence and is the effect of its own past cause. It is only in relation to something else that it is perceived as the cause of the effect. By itself, one cannot say it is a cause or an effect. So, there is cause and effect in the same way as long and short. They are mutually dependent.

Similarly, when speaking about a girl, in relation to her mother, she is the child. If however, the daughter has a baby, she becomes the mother. That same person is the daughter or child of her mother, and is the mother of her own child. This is another example of something that is relative.

In brief, when we read this verse 23:10, we can understand that all phenomena exist in that way. They all exist in relation to something else. There is nothing that exists in an independent and unrelated way.



Usually, we say that the result depends on the cause. The result is in relation to the cause. In the same way, being the cause, depends on the result.

Thus, children depend on the parents. To be called children they depend on parents. But in the same way, the parents depend on the children. To be a parent is in relation to having children. We can see that there is a mutual dependence between being a parent and being a child. This mutual relationship is easy to understand with impermanent phenomena.

But what about permanent phenomena?

For example, we speak of space, uncompounded space. What is uncompounded space? It is permanent. It does not arise due to causes and conditions but still it is something that exists in a dependent way. It is a dependently-arisen phenomenon.

What is the definition of uncompounded space? It's a mere absence of obstruction. When there is no obstruction - it's that space. Space depends on the absence of obstructiveness to exist. Therefore, even space is dependent.

That's the way it appears to the mind.

Another permanent phenomenon is true cessation, the third noble truth.

True cessation is the absence of the object that has been abandoned. We are speaking of the stain of afflictions that have been abandoned. This resultant absence of the object having been abandoned is called true cessation.

True cessation depends on what it is absent of - the object of abandonment.

In the same way, when we speak about beings or persons: a person can be either a sentient being or a Buddha. There is no other option. What makes the difference? One depends on the other to exist - in the sense that a person who has abandoned the obstructions completely, is a Buddha.

The person, who has not abandoned the obstructions completely, is a sentient being. So, we can see how one depends on the other to exist. A person who has either abandoned the obstructions or not, will either be a Buddha or a sentient being. They exist in comparison to one another, in relation to each other.

23:11

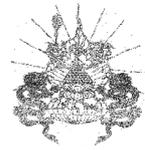
Something is designated 'unpleasant'

In dependence upon the pleasant.

And since that does not exist without reliance upon the unpleasant

The unpleasant is inadmissible.

This verse applies exactly the same logic as the previous one. The previous verse put the focus on the pleasant or attractive aspect, while here, the focus is on the unpleasant or unattractive aspect. The basic idea is the same; one depends on the other. We cannot say that something is unattractive and exclude the attractive aspect. If attractive exists, then unattractive can be posited. Unattractive cannot be posited or imputed, without the notion of



its opposite. The essence of these two verses, 23:10 and 23:11, is that neither pleasant nor unpleasant can exist without depending on the other. Neither can exist by their own entity or inherently. Both are empty of inherent existence. Both are empty of existing in an independent way, in an unrelated way.

Therefore, we check the mode of existence of all phenomena in order to understand that they do not exist inherently and to understand that there is not one phenomenon that exists without being dependently arisen. The only way of existence for all phenomena is by dependence. There is no other way.

This chapter checks the reality of afflictions. The root of all afflictions is a conception of the self. There are two conceptions of the self in the sense of the object. The object can be a person - the conception of an entity of a person - or the object can be the aggregates (usually called phenomena) - the conception of inherent existence of phenomena.

The negation is exactly the same. There is no difference in terms of subtlety between these two. However, it is said that it is slightly easier to realise the absence of the self of a person than the selflessness of phenomena. This is mentioned in the 'Middle Lam Rim', the middling stages of the path by Lama Tsong Khapa. It differs slightly from the presentation given in 'Lam Rim Chenmo'. In the Middle Lam Rim, it clearly states that it is easier to realise the selflessness of the person than to realise that selflessness of phenomena.

Why is this so?

In philosophical debate, they say, first you search for the identity of the person. Where do you find the person? You realise that the person exists in dependence on the five aggregates. You can conceive the person only by conceiving the five aggregates. In relation to the five aggregates, you can conceive a person. Therefore, it is easier to realise the selflessness of a person.

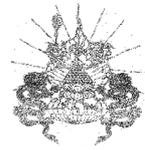
There is a different text from Drepung Loseling which clearly states that there is no difference, in terms of difficulty, to realise the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of phenomena.

Rinpoche says we should debate and figure out our own answer.

The conclusion is, as has been said already, realising the selflessness of the person is easier than realising that selflessness of phenomena, even though the selflessness is the same. It is easier because the person is based on / imputed on the aggregates. Therefore, it seems easier to understand the selflessness of the person first. Then next, realise the selflessness of the basis of imputation, the aggregates. You can enjoy a big debate on it!

Question

When Rinpoche was speaking about long and short, Buddhas and sentient beings, we were speaking about one existing in relation to the other. But could we say that long and short are just a mere label?



Rinpoche

That is another way to understand their emptiness - by realising that they are just a mere imputation.

We can say long or short, Buddha, sentient beings are labels but a label is not enough. You have to say, it's a mere label, a mere imputation. By saying that long, short, Buddha, sentient beings are a mere name or label, the little word 'mere' excludes inherent existence. That means it is just a name, not inherently existing. The fact that they are a name shows that they are not a non-existent. They exist as a phenomenon, as a name but 'merely' means they have no inherent existence. So, in one way, if you want to use the word 'label', you have to say a mere name.

Next, Rinpoche said that when we were speaking about dependence - the relation of one to another, the mutual dependence between long, short etc - the king of reasonings is: because phenomena exist dependently, they do not exist inherently. This is the king of reasonings because it shows how phenomena cannot be independent, intrinsically inherent and dependent on others at the same time. That is the best reason to prove the emptiness of inherent existence of phenomena - that they could not exist unrelated to anything else.

Verses extracted from *The Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way Called "Wisdom"* - Arya Nagarjuna; translated by Glen Svensson <http://www.glensvensson.org/materials.html>

Translated from Tibetan to English by Sze Gee Toh and Katy Fradet.

Transcribed by Ven. Irene Turner and Bhiksuni Dorje Khandro; lightly edited by Ven. Thubten Drolma