

## OCEAN OF REASONING

### DAY ONE

Today, we are going to look at a text by Lama Tsong Khapa entitled, 'An Ocean of reasoning.' This is a commentary on Nagarjuna's 'Treatise on the Middle Way'. Nagarjuna's text actually explains the meaning of emptiness as revealed in the three types of Perfection of Wisdom sutras: the extensive, the medium and the brief Perfection of Wisdom sutras.

In a sutra taught by the Buddha, he mentions the three doors of liberation. In this passage he explains how emptiness is the nature of all phenomena and that all phenomena are pacified in the state of emptiness. Thus there is no production.

Now, to understand what the three doors of liberation are, we should know that there is the door of emptiness, the door of signlessness and the door of wishlessness.

In terms of the emptiness of phenomena, this refers to the fact that the entity of phenomena is emptiness. Also the causes that give rise to various kinds of phenomena are empty of inherent existence; they do not exist independently. Thus, phenomena depend on the aggregation of causes and conditions to arise and the causes themselves need to depend on other causes and conditions. They are not independent. When these causes and conditions give rise to their results, the results themselves are not independent. All outer phenomena that give rise to results give rise to results that are not independent.

Although this is the reality, we grasp at things as existing independently. We grasp at causes as being independent and we also grasp at the results as being independent. For us, the production of results is independent and the results themselves are also independent. This is the opposite of reality.

The sutra citation goes on to explain that due to not knowing the reality of the three doors to liberation; not knowing that things exist dependently; not knowing that there is no independent production and

so forth, sentient beings undertake rebirth again and again. They are forced to experience suffering.

Here we need to understand that, in reality, phenomena do not exist independently. They do not exist truly. Likewise, from causes, the results that are produced are not independent. The results come from causes that are also not independent. Although this is the situation, we grasp the opposite. We grasp phenomena as existing independently; we grasp at causes as existing independently; we grasp at results as existing independently.

We have within our continua ignorance. This is an ignorance that is a conception of true existence, a conception of phenomena as existing independently. Due to having such ignorance we give rise to the three kinds of poison: attachment, hatred and so on. From this we have grasping because we are attached to our own side and have aversion for others' sides. Under the influence of such afflictions we create karma. The karmic imprints that are left on our continua are nourished by attachment and craving (from among the twelve links). As a result, the ripened 'becoming' imprint projects a rebirth. In that way, we are forced to take afflicted aggregates again and again. Thus, we circle in samsara and experience suffering. We need to understand this along with the knowledge that there is no independent production.

The sutra citation describes how the Buddha, out of great compassion, taught many hundreds of reasonings so that sentient beings could become free from suffering. To understand this process we have to understand how we wander in cyclic existence, propelled by ignorance. Due to the conception of true existence, we take aggregates repeatedly and we wander in the various states of samsara. As is said in Dharmakirti's 'Pramanavartika', the samsara that we are talking about really refers to the contaminated, appropriated aggregates. These aggregates are contaminated and are acquired under the influence of karma and afflictions. Therefore, we must understand that from ignorance we create karma. This karma forces us to take rebirth continuously. As a result of being reborn in cyclic existence powerlessly, we have to endure various kinds of suffering. For example, the suffering of death, sickness, ageing etc.

In the text, 'Stages of the Path to Enlightenment', we learn of the eight kinds of suffering and the six kinds of suffering and so on but in brief, we are tormented by the three kinds of suffering: the suffering of suffering; the suffering of change and pervasive, compounded suffering. Without severing the root of suffering, namely ignorance, there is no way we can free ourselves from suffering. Therefore, the Buddha, out of his great compassion, taught the means for us to cut the root of cyclic existence - to eliminate the conception of true existence. This process of cutting the root of cyclic existence involves reversing the object of appearance of ignorance. By reversing the object of appearance of ignorance, we are able to eliminate the conception of true existence. For that purpose the Buddha taught profound emptiness. In that way he leads trainees through various stages so that they are able to eventually eradicate the root of cyclic existence. For that reason, the sutra passage describes how the Buddha, through hundreds of reasons, explained emptiness.

How does the Buddha teach emptiness to the various kinds of trainees? The trainees are of various dispositions, mentalities and interests. As is said in Nagarjuna's 'Precious Garland' (Ratnavali) the Buddha teaches trainees in stages, just as a teacher would begin by teaching children the alphabet.

Here, the Buddha does not teach emptiness of the subtlest form to all trainees immediately because for some trainees, upon hearing that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, they will assume that this means that all phenomena are non-existent. As a result, they will think that there is no cause and effect; that there are no past and future lives and that nothing exists. Consequently, they will fall into the extreme of annihilation. They will come to hold the view of nihilism. Therefore, at the beginning, the Buddha teaches the disciples that phenomena exist truly.

As is said in the sutra, the Buddha instructs trainees in the same way a skilful doctor would cure his patients. A skilful doctor would prescribe medicine in accordance with the individual needs of his patients. He would not give the strongest and best medicine to all his

patients because some of the patients might not be able to take strong medication at the beginning. In fact, by taking strong medication, they would be harmed rather than benefited. Therefore, the doctor would begin by administering gentle treatment to benefit the patient. Later on, he would give stronger kinds of medication. The Buddha, then, is it like a skilful doctor. He teaches according to the needs of the trainees. This is like the teacher mentioned in 'Precious Garland' who begins by teaching the alphabet rather than complicated words and phrases. As is shown in this citation from 'Precious Garland,' the Buddha teaches in a graduated manner, according to the needs of trainees. What he teaches to one type of trainee he may not teach to another.

To understand this citation, we can look at the various tenet systems that have been taught by the Buddha. For disciples of the lower schools, the Buddha taught only simple forms of selflessness. For example, the Buddha taught selflessness of persons to the Vaibashikas (Great Exposition School).

He taught selflessness of persons to the Sutra School, the Sautrantika. Here, there is a lack of a permanent, unitary, independent person but the Buddha does not go on to teach that phenomena are selfless. For some of the more intelligent disciples, however, the Buddha went on to teach the absence of a self-sufficient, self-substantially existent person. Therefore, according to the needs of the trainees, the Buddha taught that external objects exist etc.

Moving up to the Mahayana tenet systems, we have, at the beginning, the Mind-Only School (the Cittamatra system). From this point onwards the Buddha taught selflessness of phenomena. For the Mind-Only School, the Buddha taught a gross or coarse form of selflessness of phenomena, referring to the emptiness of duality or the absence of the object and subject being different substances.

As we move further up the Mahayana tenet systems, we have the Middle Way Autonomy School, (Svatantrika Madhyamika School). There, the Buddha taught a subtler form of selflessness of phenomena, the emptiness of true existence. When we ascend the Mahayana tenet system even further, we reach the Middle Way Consequent School, (Prasangikha Madhyamika), in which the Buddha

taught that outer and inner phenomena, without exception, lack existence by way of their own character. As you can see, the Buddha taught various systems. For the most intelligent disciples, the Buddha taught the subtlest reality.

The Buddha gave teachings according to the dispositions and needs of trainees in the three turnings of the wheel of dharma, which were on three levels. In the first turning of the wheel of dharma, he taught that phenomena exist by way of their own character. In the third turning of the wheel, he denied the existence of duality. He taught the absence of subject and object to be different substances. In the second turning of the wheel of dharma, he taught that phenomena are empty of inherent existence.

Through these various kinds of skilful guidance, the Buddha eventually taught that all phenomena, outer and inner, are empty of inherent existence. All phenomena are dependent-arising.

Thus, the Buddha's teachings are all for the sake of sentient beings to overcome suffering. In particular, the Buddha's teaching on profound emptiness is for sentient beings to be able to sever the root of cyclic existence. Not being able to bear sentient beings' suffering, the Buddha, out of his great compassion, revealed methods for sentient beings to free themselves from suffering and the causes of suffering, including their seeds. In such a way the Buddha taught so that all sentient beings could attain the state of Nirvana. Similarly, we should understand that every single teaching taught by the Buddha was for the sake of leading sentient beings to Nirvana. There is not one teaching given by the Buddha that is not for this purpose.

Given that the Buddha taught in stages, how should we go about studying the teachings of the Buddha? We have to go in accordance with the system of tenets. At the beginning, we should carefully examine the presentation of the views of the Great Exposition School, (the Vaibashikas) and also the Sutra School, (Sautantrikas). On this level the systems refute a self of person but assert the existence of external objects. We have to understand their points of view and modes of assertion thoroughly.

Moving on to the second level, we have the system of the

Cittamatrins (the Mind-Only School). In this system, external objects, which have been asserted in the lower schools, are refuted. We have to understand how, in the Mind-Only School, subject and object being different substantial entities, are refuted. They assert non-duality. They also assert the absence of subject and object being different substances. Based on that, we should go on to understand how, on the next level, the Middle Way Autonomy School, (Svatantrikas) deny true existence.

In this system, they maintain that there is a combination of things existing from their own side and a mind positing it. If one asserts that things are able to be established simply from their own side, without a mind positing them, then you are grasping at true existence. In this system, a positing mind is necessary to establish phenomena. It is not sufficient that outer and inner phenomena have some kind of existence from their own side.

Moving on, we have the system of the Consequence School (Prasangikha) which holds that all phenomena are merely imputed by name. There is not the slightest independent existence from the side of the object.

We have to examine and understand these various philosophical systems progressively. In this way, we come to an understanding of how phenomena actually exist. As is said by Guntang Jampayang,

"The understanding of these systems is like ascending the steps of a staircase."

First, one has to understand the views of the Vaibashika and Sautantrika schools. Next, one goes on to understand the Cittamatra School and on that basis one is able to examine the Middle Way systems, first, the Svatantrika and then the Prasanghika.

One has to understand how, through negating existence from its own side, conventional phenomena can still be posited. Guntang Jampayang says that if we do not progress in such a systematic manner but rather, try to understand the view of the highest school from the outset, this will be like grasping at space.

Indeed, the view of the Prasanghika, the Middle Way Consequence school, is very difficult to understand. For that reason, we have to

progress in a gradual manner so that we can arrive at an accurate and precise understanding of their assertions. At the outset, it is necessary to identify the object of negation, which is very subtle and not easy to recognise. If, when you are looking for this object of negation, you ignore what appears to you and try to look for a subtle object of negation elsewhere, then this will not have any benefit for ascertaining emptiness.

The emptiness that is explained by the Prasanghika Middle Way Consequence School, is an emptiness of independent existence, an emptiness of existence from the side of the object. This emptiness is revealed by the Buddha in the three kinds of Perfection of Wisdom sutras, the extensive, medium and brief.

Because we are negating independent existence, we are negating an existence that comes from the side of the object. We are negating an existence that does not depend on parts. These various explanations, revealed by the Buddha in the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, were later explained and clarified by Nagarjuna using infinite forms of reasoning. In particular, his text called 'Treatise on the Middle Way' explains, over many chapters, the various kinds of reasonings to refute independent existence, existence from its own side.

This brings us to the actual subject matter of the teaching today. So please generate the best motivation thinking, "I want to place all sentient beings in the state of non-abiding Nirvana. In order to be able to benefit all sentience beings in this way, I first need to attain the state of Buddhahood. I definitely need the realisation of emptiness. Before I can realise emptiness, I need to determine and understand the meaning of emptiness. For that reason I am going to listen to these teachings on profound emptiness."

This brings us to the title of this text, (P7). Here, we see the title, "An Ocean of Reasoning, Commentary to Mulamadhyamakakarika, the text known as 'Wisdom'". The title says, 'An Ocean of Reasoning'. Why an ocean of reasoning? Because, in order to determine the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena, infinite reasonings are required. Therefore, there is a presentation of an ocean of infinite

reasonings.

There are different sections in the text, which begins with an expression of worship. This is followed by a promise to compose the text and then an exhortation to listen to the explanations. These belong to the activities prior to embarking on the main body of explanation, which ends with a conclusion.

Now, we will look at the 'Expression of Worship', on page 7, which begins with,

"I prostrate with veneration to the lotus feet of the Lord Manjushri."

Why does Lama Tsong Khapa prostrate to Lord Manjushri? This is because it is in dependence on Manjushri's instructions that he is able to realise emptiness. For that reason he pays homage to Manjushri. We can see Lama Tsong Khapa's reverence for Manjushri in various of his compositions. As an example, in his 'Praise To Dependent Arising,' Lama Tsong Khapa mentions how he relied upon the excellent explanations of various masters. In another case, by relying on Chandrakirti's 'Clear Words' (Prasannapada), he was able to get a clear understanding of what the Buddha's intention on emptiness was. Based on that, he also studied the commentary written by Buddhapalita. Eventually, he was able to discern emptiness directly. It was through the kindness of Manjushri that Je Tsong Khapa was able to receive unmistakable instructions.

Furthermore, he also studied the various teachings on emptiness. He regarded his guru as inseparable from the deity. He made supplications and engaged in purification of obscurations and negativities, as well as in the accumulation of merit. Through these various methods Je Tsong Khapa was able to realise emptiness. Therefore, he pays homage to Manjushri because he was the one who provided the instructions. It was due to Manjushri's kindness that he was able to achieve attainments.

As with 'Praise to Dependent Arising', in another composition entitled 'Lekshe Nyingpo' (The Essence of Eloquence) - a treatise differentiating the definitive and the interpretive meanings, he also



praises Manjushri. As a result of relying upon the instructions of Manjushri he was able to gain realisations of emptiness. The first stanza reads, (p7)

"May I be sustained by the Victor,  
Who is universally praised by the wise  
As the crown of all teachers  
For teaching emptiness of essence as the meaning of dependent  
arising."

Here, we have an expression of worship directed at the Buddha. The Buddha is someone who is universally praised by the wise as 'the crown of all teachers.' Thus, the Buddha is known as the peerless teacher, the unsurpassable teacher. The reason is because he teaches emptiness of inherent existence. He teaches the emptiness of essence, or the emptiness of inherent existence, as the meaning of dependent arising. This stanza is similar to Lama Tsong Khapa's praise of the Buddha in his composition, 'In Praise of Dependent Arising', in which he says,

"Seeing and speaking of dependent arising,  
He was the teacher supreme.  
I bow to him who knew and taught  
The all-conquering dependent arising."

Thus the Buddha is praised as the unsurpassable teacher for his teaching of emptiness as the meaning of dependant arising. The next stanza is an expression of worship to Manjushri.

"I take refuge in the Lord of the treasure of wisdom,  
Who, seeing that discourse as the heart of all the scriptures,  
Through this profound discourse, exhilarates  
The universal assembly of bodhisattvas."

Here, the author is taking refuge in Manjushri. It says, "Who, seeing

that discourse as the heart of all the scriptures." 'That discourse' refers to the teaching mentioned in the earlier stanza - the teaching of emptiness as the meaning of dependent arising; the teaching of dependent arising as the meaning of emptiness. The Buddha taught that particular teaching and Manjushri came to represent the treasure of that wisdom. Manjushri is like the spiritual guide to all learner bodhisattvas. Here, it says, 'Who seeing that discourse as the heart of all the scriptures, Through this profound discourse' which satisfies. It causes all the bodhisattvas to be satiated. Through seeing the essence of all these scriptures, Manjushri acted as the spiritual guide to all learners so that, eventually, they could realise the treasury of wisdom.

The next stanza is an expression of worship to Nagarjuna because he clarified the definitive and interpretable meanings of the teachings.

"May Nagarjuna, the sun among teachers, be victorious,  
Who, having identified countless areas of perplexity,  
Which could divert one from the definitive meaning of the teachings,  
Then refutes them eloquently."

It is said that Nagarjuna was able to clarify points of doubt in the text. He was able to refute mistaken points eloquently. One needs to understand what is meant by teachings of 'definitive meaning' and teachings of 'interpretable meaning'. As is said in the 'King of Concentration' sutra, the definitive-meaning sutras and the interpretable-meaning sutras need to be differentiated. This can be done from the point of view of the subject matter or from the point of view of the words.

Gyalsab Je also gives clarification on these points. From the view of the Middle Way Consequence School, (the Madhyamika Prasangika school), if the subject matter is mainly the explicit, ultimate truth or emptiness, then that teaching is a definitive-meaning sutra. However, if the main subject matter is the conventional truth then the teaching is an interpretable-meaning sutra.

When we look at the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, for example, (the extensive, medium and brief), to determine whether or not they are

definitive-meaning or interpretable-meaning, we need to check whether the subject matter needs interpreting, in order for us to arrive at reality. If such an interpretation is not required then the scriptures are definitive-meaning. If interpretation is required then they are interpretable-meaning scriptures.

Similarly, from the point of view of the words we need to examine whether they are literally acceptable. This is another way of looking at the criteria of definitive and interpretable meaning.

The expression of worship to Nagarjuna continues with a second stanza (4):

"And, who, providing unsurpassed ascertainment of that system  
Through countless shining beams of argument -  
Various proofs and refutations -  
Dispels the thick darkness at the heart of grasping the extremes."

Nagarjuna provides countless shining beams or paths of reasoning or logic. Through these logical systems, he is able to dispel the thick darkness at the heart of grasping the extremes. Through various proofs and refutations, he is able to eliminate the various views of grasping at extremes.

In general, when we talk about extremes, we can talk about the extreme of permanence and the extreme of annihilation but in this context 'grasping at extremes' does not refer to that. It actually refers to the conception of true existence.

Nagarjuna, the supreme among teachers, who clarifies the definitive-meaning sutras, which elaborate the means to dispel the darkness of grasping at extremes, is the sun among teachers, as is mentioned in the first line of the third stanza.

Next, we have the expression of worship to the masters, stanza 5.

"I venerate the upholders of the tradition of the great charioteer,  
The noble Aryadeva and Aryasura and the rest,  
Who have properly preserved the supreme system  
And who have extensively illuminated the doctrine of the sage."

Here, homage is paid to the upholders of the tradition of the great charioteer. This tradition refers to that of Nagarjuna. These upholders include Aryadeva, his heart-son disciple and other disciples such as Aryasura etc. They have properly preserved the supreme system and for a long time illuminated the teachings of the Buddha. In the following verse,(6) we have the expression of worship to the masters Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti.

"Just like the saviour in the night, the moon among the constellations,  
The system of the masters Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti  
Shines most radiantly of all the commentators.  
Even when I recollect them my hairs stand on end."

Here, we have to understand that Nagarjuna elucidated the intended meaning of the extensive, medium and brief Perfection of Wisdom sutras. Among the various commentators, Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti were the most outstanding. They shone like the moon among the constellations of stars. When recollecting them Je Tsong Khapa says his hairs stand on end.

In the subsequent verse (7) we have an expression of worship by Lama Tsong Khapa to his gurus, who revealed the Middle Way teachings to him,

"By relying on the lotus feet, my enemy, ignorance, is completely  
Vanquished through his illumination of the path of reason.  
May I still be sustained until the end of cyclic existence.  
Through the marvellous acts of the supreme guide, the teacher."

The supreme guide, the teacher, would include for example, Rendawa, his teacher who taught him the view of the Middle Way and other gurus. Je Tsong Khapa says that by relying on his teachers, ignorance, his enemy, was completely destroyed. He prays to be taken care of till the end of cyclic existence by their marvellous acts.

The next stanza introduces another theme. Lama Tsong Khapa

explains why he is generating enthusiasm with respect to composing this text.

"I am pleased to comment on this profound Middle Path,  
Having been requested to do so by many spiritual friends  
Who aspire to ascertain the definitive meaning  
And by the illustrious ruler of the kingdom."

Here, he relates how he was requested to write this commentary, by many friends, including the virtuous king, who wanted to understand the definitive meaning. Therefore, he is enthusiastic about composing this text. He is pleased to explain the profound middle path.

The following stanza identifies what a faulty vessel is. It describes which kind of trainee is unsuitable to receive this teaching.

"Although those who are satisfied by the mere term 'definitive meaning'

And those who are contented just by a glimpse of partial meaning  
And those in whom the desire for practice arises from the heart  
But who relinquish these important treatises, may not want this."

Here, he is saying that there are some people who are satisfied merely with the term 'definitive meaning' and who do not go on to do more. Then there are those, who although not satisfied with the term 'definitive meaning', are contented with just a partial glimpse of the meaning and so do not have a complete understanding.

A third group, who although have a sincere desire for practice, relinquish these important treatises and do not want to engage in listening to or contemplating the great treatises. These three groups are faulty vessels and the composition here, by Je Tsong Khapa, would not benefit them.

The remaining two stanzas describe the attributes of suitable vessels and identify the trainees for whom the treatise would be beneficial.

"Having eloquently dispelled the darkness of confusion

By the lamp of perfect reasoning and having resolved all misconceptions

Regarding the meaning of the Prajnaparamita, the heart of the definitive scriptures,

Which is the path on which countless yogis tread.

For the wise ones who wish to contemplate Nagarjuna's purport as it is,

By means of decisive views regarding how things stand,

I will now eloquently comment on Mulamadhyamakakarika.

So, listen with veneration!"

Lama Tsong Khapa, then, makes the exhortation to such vessels to listen. Thus, the suitable disciples who will gain benefit are those who have the lamp of perfect reasoning. Reasoning is used to dispel the darkness of confusion, to eliminate their ignorance and wrong conceptions regarding the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. The wise trainees, therefore, should listen to this commentary with respect and veneration. In effect, it is saying, 'Do you have these qualities?' At least we can make prayers to be such trainees, such vessels. We can try!

## PRELIMINARY EXPLANATIONS - p9

Now let us look at the actual explanations. With respect to the doctrine explained here, there are two parts:

The preliminaries and the actual explanation.

The preliminaries are divided into five parts:

1. Necessity and manner of investigating the way things really are
2. Greatness of the author of the text
3. The articulation of his treatises
4. The benefits of aspiring to the profound Dharma
5. Identifying the vessel into which the profound Dharma can be introduced

Regarding the first part, the text says, (p9-10)

"Everything the Buddhas have said about generosity and other similar virtues, is a means to cultivate the wisdom that comprehends the way things really are for those who have not cultivated it and to stabilise and continue its development for those who have already cultivated it. Therefore,

'Bhodhicaryavatara' says,

All the branches of the teachings are taught by the Sage  
For the cultivation of wisdom.

Therefore, those who wish to pacify suffering  
Should cultivate wisdom."

This repeats a point mentioned earlier, that all the teachings of the Buddha are for the sake of generating wisdom. Everything Buddhas have said regarding generosity and the other virtues is a means to cultivate the wisdom that understands reality. For those who have not generated such a wisdom these teachings will provide the opportunity for doing so. For those who have already generated such a wisdom they will maintain and increase it. For that reason we have this citation from 'The Bodhisattva's Way of Life.' (Chapter 9 verse 1)

Those who wish to pacify suffering need to pacify the causes of suffering. Nobody wants suffering, so we need to subdue the causes of suffering. To achieve this we need to eliminate ignorance, the ignorance that is a conception of a self. To do this we need to realise that the adhered object of such an ignorance does not exist. Therefore, we have to cultivate the wisdom realising selflessness. This is the method to eliminate suffering.

The next passage is related to an analogy of blind people being led to a city by a guide. A group of blind people without a guide, cannot reach the city. They do not know the path and there is no one to lead them. Similarly, the first five perfections are like blind people. In the absence of the Perfection of Wisdom to guide them, it is impossible to reach the city of Enlightenment.

Chandrakirti, in his 'Supplement to the Middle Way' (Mulamadhyamaka karika) also makes a similar point, saying that the first five of the six perfections are like blind people who require the perfection of wisdom, analogous to a sighted person, to guide them to the state of Buddhahood.

After the citation from Shantideva's text, it continues,

"Therefore, since all the teachings are directly or indirectly devoted to establishing the way things are, the highest obligation of the wise person is to seek the absolutely clear eye of wisdom which ascertains the way things really are, viz., dependent origination. Such things as generosity are led to the city of liberation just as a group of blind people are led to their destination by a skilful guide.

Accordingly, all the teachings given by the Buddha are directly or indirectly associated with emptiness. For those who are not ready for emptiness, who may fall into the extreme of annihilation, the Buddha gave teachings related to emptiness, albeit indirectly.

Since all the teachings are devoted to establishing the way things are, the excellent course of action for the intelligent ones, is to seek the absolutely clear eye of wisdom, which ascertains the way things really are. The clear eye of wisdom here, is the wisdom realising selflessness. This is how the clear eye of wisdom leads generosity etc, to liberation, just as a group of blind people are led to their destination by a skilful guide.

In this passage, the highest obligations of the wise ones are mentioned. The wise person is the intelligent one who wants to fulfil the two types of welfare, that for oneself and that for others. Such intelligent beings, in order to free others from suffering - to fulfil the welfare of others - realise that the main hindrance is ignorance, ignorance that is a conception of a self. Therefore, they realise the necessity of the wisdom realising emptiness (selflessness). It is only with this wisdom that they are able to repudiate the object of appearance of ignorance.



## END OF DAY 1

### DAY 2

As said by Nagarjuna in his '60 Stanzas of Reasoning'

"It is through understanding that phenomena are not truly existent - not independently existent - that one can reach the state of liberation and Buddhahood."

In this stanza he explains that if we grasp at outer and inner phenomena; if we grasp at samsara and nirvana as existing inherently, then we will be trapped in cyclic existence. Likewise if we hold that, if things do not exist inherently then they must be utterly non-existent, then through such a wrong view, we would fall into the lower realms.

By holding such a view of nihilism we would also be prevented from attaining liberation. Therefore, we should understand that all phenomena are not independently existent. Both things and non-things, referring to permanent phenomena and impermanent phenomena, are not inherently existent. Here, permanent phenomena refers to nirvana, whereas impermanent phenomena refers to cyclic existence. Having well-understood that both samsara and nirvana are empty of independent existence - empty of inherent existence - we should make effort to realise that.

First, we have to determine, through valid cognition, that both samsara and nirvana are empty of inherent existence. By familiarising ourselves with that, we will attain a direct realisation. By enhancing this realisation, increasing it continually, we will attain the state of liberation and Buddhahood. It is through such realisation that we free ourselves from the two obscurations and attain the final state of enlightenment.

In this stanza by Nagarjuna, he states that we will attain liberation if we thoroughly understand how both samsara and nirvana are empty of inherent existence. To become free from the suffering of cyclic existence we must understand exactly what we are trying to be free from.

Basically, cyclic existence refers to the contaminated aggregates that

we have appropriated under the influence of karma and afflictions. Because we have these contaminated aggregates we cannot transcend the nature of suffering. This means that we are tormented by various kinds of suffering such as birth, ageing, sickness and death.

Besides these, we experience many other types of adversity. If we generate the wish to be free from cyclic existence; if we aspire to become liberated from samsara, we must understand that we are trying to become free from a certain kind of suffering. As already mentioned, there are three types of suffering: the suffering of suffering; the suffering of change and pervasive, compounded suffering. When we talk about generating renunciation, wanting to become free from cyclic existence, we should focus mainly on the third type, pervasive compounded suffering. Panchen Losang Chogyen has said that from among these three kinds of suffering, even animals wish to be free from the suffering of suffering and they engage in various methods to become free from this first kind. Indeed, we can observe that when animals are tormented by heat they will attempt to escape it by going to another place. Alternatively, if they are experiencing cold conditions, they will try to escape from that and go to a place of warmth. Therefore, even animals have the desire to become free from the suffering of suffering.

Now, with regard to the second kind of suffering, the suffering of change, it refers to contaminated happy feelings. Through good clothes, good food, good dwellings etc, we can experience contaminated happiness. However, these types of happiness are not, by nature, happiness. In fact, they are in the nature of suffering and even non-Buddhists attempt to become released from them. We must, however, also wish to become free from the third kind of suffering. This is the actual wish we should focus on - to be liberated from pervasive, compounded suffering. This suffering refers to the contaminated aggregates that are compounded by karma and afflictions.

As Buddhist practitioners, we need to generate the desire to free ourselves from this third type of suffering, not just the first two.

We mentioned the second kind of suffering, the suffering of change.

This is identified as contaminated happy feelings. They are not in the nature of happiness even though they seem to be happiness. What happens when we experience this contaminated type of happiness is that there is a decrease in suffering. Because of this we experienced a sense of well-being. Nevertheless, this feeling is not in the nature of happiness because it can turn into manifest suffering. To give an example of this process, let us suppose we are hungry. We eat food and the suffering of hunger decreases. As a result, we experience satisfaction but if we continue to eat, that sense of happiness will quickly change into suffering.

Aryadeva states in his text that the nature of contaminated happiness is such that the more we utilise it, the more we enjoy it, the more suffering it will bring us. No matter how much we rely on contaminated happiness we will not gain satisfaction. Ultimately, it will bring us suffering. In the citation by Aryadeva, he continues to explain that we must generate the desire to be free from suffering.

The feelings of contaminated happiness that are the second kind of suffering - the suffering of change - are not the subtlest because even non-Buddhists develop the wish to escape from it.

As mentioned earlier, animals have a wish to be free from the suffering of suffering. Therefore, as uncommon practitioners, we need to foster the desire to be released from the third kind of suffering, pervasive, compounded suffering. This is the real basis upon which we can generate our renunciation. Accordingly, this third type of suffering refers to the aggregates that are compounded by karma and afflictions.

Then the question is, how do we bring an end to these contaminated aggregates? If we do not stop their causes, we will continue to have such contaminated aggregates. Karma and afflictions are their causes, compounding the contaminated aggregates. If we want to eliminate the aggregates we have to eliminate karma and afflictions, otherwise our contaminated aggregates will continue to exist in a later continuity, upon which, we will have to experience more suffering.

We have already mentioned that our aggregates are the foundation

for various sufferings such as birth, ageing, sickness and death. Similarly, it is because we have our aggregates that we experience the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and other kinds of suffering. Understanding that the aggregates are really in the nature of suffering, we should meditate on this fact repeatedly until we develop a strong wish to become free from them.

An analogy that describes our situation is that we are like a person carrying a pile of thorns on our back. In such a case, we will be tormented by suffering continuously. Our aggregates are the pile of thorns that we carry constantly. As long as we do not put down this pile of thorns, we will not be able to find relief from suffering. Therefore, we should understand that our contaminated aggregates, appropriated by karma and afflictions, are the source of our suffering. When we generate renunciation we should do so on the basis of understanding that we need to abandon the contaminated aggregates, the foundation of our suffering.

When the Buddha explained the first noble truth, he said that suffering is to be understood. He further clarified sufferings as being the aggregates. The second noble truth explains that the origins of suffering are to be abandoned. In his 'Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life' (Bodhicaryavatara), Shantideva describes the benefits of being mindful of suffering. By understanding that our aggregates are in the nature of suffering we will generate renunciation, wanting to become free from them. Through understanding suffering, we will be able to reduce and eliminate our pride. Another advantage of understanding suffering is that we will generate compassion. Since we ourselves, do not want suffering, we will not be able to bear the sight of others' suffering. As a result, we will generate compassion.

In addition, since we do not want suffering, we need to abandon the causes of suffering. This means that we have to refrain from creating negative actions. Thus, another advantage of remembering suffering is that we will shy away from misdeeds. Finally, in this stanza, it states that we will generate joy in virtue. We will have great enthusiasm for creating virtue.

Since we want to abandon suffering, we need to abandon their

causes. What are their causes? From among the twelve links of dependent arising, the causes of suffering are identified as ignorance and karma. Of the two, the principal cause of suffering is ignorance. This is because even if we have karma, in the absence of afflictions, the karma will not issue its results. For that reason we identify the main root of suffering as ignorance - ignorance that is a conception of self, or the ignorance that is the view of the transitory collection.

With such ignorance we grasp at the I. We hold that there is an independent I that performs various activities - going, sitting etc. This independent I is an I that does not depend on other factors. As explained earlier, this kind of ignorance - the conception of self - is the basis for us to create karma. Once we have created it, we are forced to experience suffering.

How do we discard this conception of self? Firstly, there is a conception that holds that I exists, independently. In order to eliminate such a conception, we need to generate an opposing consciousness that apprehends the self as not existing independently. The conception, holding to a self existing independently, is an erroneous consciousness, whereas, the consciousness apprehending the self as NOT existing independently, is a correct consciousness.

In other words, the wisdom realising selflessness has a valid support, whereas ignorance, the conception of self, lacks a valid support. Therefore, when we increase the strength of the wisdom realising selflessness, we shall be able to eliminate the conception of self. Thus, the wisdom realising selflessness, having a valid support, can be increased indefinitely. The example given is that of heat and cold. When there is cold and the heat increases the cold will decrease correspondingly. Likewise, when we generate the wisdom realising selflessness, the conception of self, ignorance, will be reduced and eventually eliminated.

We understand the importance of meditating on selflessness and of cultivating the wisdom realising selflessness but before we can do that effectively, we need to determine what selflessness, what emptiness, is. Since the main text that deals with the meaning of selflessness or emptiness is Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle Way, we shall engage

in the study of this text.

Let us continue from where we left off yesterday. Recall that we are on the set of outlines starting on page 9 - at the first of the five outlines of the Preliminary Explanations:

### **Necessity and Manner of Investigating the Way Things Really Are.**

We have reached page 10, one third-down where it begins,

"Their hermeneutical methods are these: In virtue of the fact that many different teachings, some definitive and some requiring interpretation, are provided in accordance with the abilities of different disciples, doubts arise regarding which of these teachings are to be taken literally and which are not. So the meaning of the Buddha's teachings should be investigated following a system completely justified by arguments that literally demonstrate how the scriptures of the teacher are to be taken, that they are not to be taken otherwise, that undermine alternative interpretations, and also, through arguments against their interpretations. This is the instruction given unanimously by all the great charioteers."

Here is the discussion of how to differentiate between definitive-meaning scriptures and interpretable-meaning scriptures. The Buddha gave many different teachings in accordance with the abilities of different disciples. Doubt will arise as to how to recognise definitive-meaning and interpretable-meaning scriptures.

For the Middle Way Consequent school, (Prasangika Madhyamika), in terms of the subject matter, if the main explicit subject matter is emptiness, then that scripture is a definitive-meaning scripture. On the other hand, if the main, explicit subject-matter is the conventional truth then that scripture is an interpretable-meaning scripture.

From the point of view of the Middle Way Autonomy School (Svatantrika Madhyamika), this criterion is not sufficient because the scripture also needs to be literally acceptable, in order for it to be a definitive-meaning scripture. In other words, for the Autonomy School,

not only does the scripture need to teach emptiness specifically, it must also be literally acceptable to qualify as a scripture of definitive-meaning.

When we look at the Mind Only school (Cittamatra), the criterion used for determining a definitive-meaning scripture is whether or not the scripture is literally acceptable. If it is literally acceptable then it is definitive-meaning. Here, we need to assess whether a scripture is definitive or interpretable by reasoning. Although a certain passage may relate certain content explicitly, that passage may not be literally acceptable, in the sense that it is taught according to the particular needs of certain disciples.

Relying upon reason we need to interpret the intended meaning.

Lama Tsong Khapa, in his 'Yeshe Nyingpo' (Essence of Eloquence), a treatise differentiating the definitive-meaning from the interpretable-meaning, expresses the need to apply stainless reasoning in order to distinguish the definitive from the interpretable. Those statements that contradict reasoning need interpreting. Therefore, certain scriptures are not acceptable literally.

This statement by Lama Tsong Khapa, in his 'Essence of Eloquence' also explains that if a scripture needs to be interpreted - if the literal meaning is contradicted by valid cognition - then one has to take it as an interpretable-meaning scripture rather than a definitive-meaning scripture. Therefore, when trying to investigate whether a scripture is definitive-meaning or interpretable-meaning, one must definitely apply faultless reasoning to examine the subject matter and the words.

With this we have completed the first of the five outlines for the preliminaries. Let us move on to the second outline which is

## **The Greatness of the Author of the Text (P10)**

In this section we will discuss the greatness of Nagarjuna who was prophesied by the Buddha as someone who would elucidate his teachings. As is said in the 'Lankavatara Sutra',

"The vehicle of discriminative wisdom

Is not subject to the comprehension of sophists (or logicians).  
After the passing away of the protector  
Please tell, who would hold their tradition thereafter?  
Thus, the Buddha was asked who, after his demise, would maintain  
the vehicle – the object of the discriminative wisdom of meditative  
equipoise – that is free from verbal and conceptual elaboration."

In this passage the Buddha is asked who will uphold the tradition,  
the vehicle of discriminative wisdom. Here, discriminative wisdom  
refers to wisdom realising emptiness. Who then, would maintain such  
a vehicle that is free from verbal and conceptual elaborations? This  
emptiness is not an object that is realised by logicians.

"The Buddha replies,  
You, the wise man should know  
That after the parinirvana of the Buddha,  
The holder of the system will come  
After some time has passed.

In the land of Vidarbha in the South (of India)  
One widely renowned as 'the monk Sri'  
Who will be named 'Naga' (p11)  
(That actual name of the monk is 'Sri' but is commonly known as  
'Naga')  
Destroying the positions of nihilism and reificationism."  
(He will destroy the positions of existence and non-existence)

As already explained, the position of existence means to maintain  
that phenomena in samsara and nirvana are inherently existent. The  
position of non-existence is to hold that as phenomena in samsara and  
nirvana do not exist inherently; they must be utterly non-existent.  
These then, are the two positions of existence and nonexistence or of  
reificationalism and nihilism. Then the monk, Sri, or Naga, will destroy  
these two positions.



"He will propound my vehicle in the world,  
The supreme Mahayana,  
Will achieve the ground of joyfulness  
(This is the first bodhisattva ground which he will achieve in that life.)  
He will then ascend to the Blissful Land." (Sukhavati)

The text continues,

"Thus, the Buddha said that the definite vehicle, (definitive-meaning vehicle) free from the two extremes of existence and nonexistence, (or reificationism and nihilism), will be propounded by Nagarjuna. This, as said in the 'Suvarnaprabhas Sutra' (Golden Light Sutra), is the reincarnation of the Lichavi, who was, during the Buddha's time, called Sarvalokapriyadasana because in the 'Mahamega' (Great Cloud Sutra) the Buddha says,

'Four hundred years after my passing away, this boy will become a monk named Naga and will disseminate my doctrine; eventually he will become the Victor named Jnanakaraprabha in the land called Prasada Prabha.'

In 'Manjushrimulakalpa' of the Action Tantric School, the time of advent and the name are the same but it is said that he would live for six hundred years."

In other words, at the time when Nagarjuna comes, his name will be the same as that mentioned in the sutra citations above. In addition, it says in the 'Manjushrimulakalpa' that Nagarjuna will live for 600 years. Then there is another sutra citation from the 'Mahabheriharakapariavarta-sutra' (The Great Drum Sutra) which says,

"After the teacher's passing away, when the human lifespan becomes eighty years and his doctrine declines, this Lichavi boy, Sarvalokapriyadasana, will become a monk holding the teacher's name and will disseminate the doctrine.

He will die after completing 100 years, and will be born in the Blissful Land."(Sukhavati)

"Atisha Dipankara and Bodhibhadra also maintain that this passage is a prediction of the master (Nagarjuna) which is based on the traditional belief that the Lichavi boy and Nagarjuna are the same personal continuum. It is said that the prediction in 'Mahadundubhi' (The Great Drum Sutra) is for his final appearance in the south. Therefore, his emergence after 400 years is his second appearance in the south. The 'Lankavatara Sutra' and Manjushrimulakala say that he would proceed to the Blissful Land after attaining the first ground. But in the 'Mahadundubhi' the monk is said to be of the seventh ground."

So here, there are different numbers regarding his attainments etc. We should understand that Nagarjuna lived for a very long time. There are different appearances in the south. His different attainment levels refer to the earlier and later parts of his life.

"The predictions in 'Mahamegha' and 'Mahadundubhi' that he would be enlightened in the future are for the enlightenment of the manifest body in the desire realm. These are predictions for the display of the emanation body, or the nirmanakaya, in the desire realm. But this does not contradict the statement in the 'Pradipodyotana-tika' (Clear Lamp) that Nagarjuna attained the status of Vajradhara in that very life through the path of supreme yoga, (referring to highest yoga tantra) because these are similar to the statements that the teacher Sakyamuni would achieve enlightenment when the human lifespan would be 100 and that he had achieved enlightenment many aeons back, which do not contradict each other. If a great person like the teacher Nagarjuna, who lived 600 years, could not be enlightened through the supreme yoga (highest yoga tantra) then the claim in the supreme tantra that a superior practitioner can achieve the status of Vajradhara in a single lifetime would be idle words. Thus, the statement in the 'Yuktisastikavrtti' (Chandrakirti's commentary on Nagarjuna's 'Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning') that this teacher had not completed his

activity, is in accordance with the path of Prajnaparamita vehicle alone."

In this text by Chandrakirti, it is said that Nagarjuna did not complete his activity, did not attain full enlightenment. This is made from the point of view of the path of the sutra vehicle - the paramita perfection vehicle alone. This is not an explanation that is made from the point of view of tantra.

Having completed this section on the greatness of the author of the text, we want to know which treatises he composed. That brings us to the third section.

### **The Articulation of His Treatises (p12)**

The text continues,

"This master has written many treatises, such as, 'Yogasataka' in the secular fields

and on studies of inner phenomena, based on tantra and the 'Prajnaparamita'.

This means that Nagarjuna wrote many treatises that are not particular to Buddhism; they are common to the non-Buddhists, such as Yogasataka (100 Applications). Other studies on inner phenomena are Buddhist treatises based on tantra and sutra (Paramita).

"He presents the profound middle path as definitive through authoritative sources by citations in 'Sutrasamuccaya' of many sutras, like the '100,000 Verse Prajnaparamita' and those from the bodhisattva literature..."

This says that Nagarjuna presents the profound middle path through definitive-meaning scriptures, using citations from Sutrasamuccaya and also the original sutras by the Buddha, such as the 100,000 Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra and also texts from the Bodhisattva scripture basket.

The text continues,

"...he establishes it by providing numerous arguments in the six treatises."

He used infinite reasonings in the six treatises. What are the six? First is, 'Mulamadhyamakakarika' ('Treatise on the Middle Way' or 'Fundamental Wisdom').

Second is Sunyatasaptati, (The 70 Verses on Emptiness).

Third, Vigrahavyavartani (The Refutation of Objections).

Fourth, Yuktisastika (60 Stanzas of Reasoning).

Fifth, Vaidalyasutra (The Finely Woven).

Sixth, Ratnavali (The Precious Garland).

The six collections of reasoning are listed here but sometimes we talk about the five collections of reasoning, which would include the first five texts mentioned and exclude 'Ratnavali'. All these treatises apply infinite forms of reasoning to establish their proof. 'Ratnavali' however, in addition to applying reasonings, also presents the extensive path. So when we talk about the six treatises, this includes 'Ratnavali'.

Some of his peons, (praises), discuss emptiness but not many of them present arguments. Some of the praises teach emptiness but not many of them present proofs by way of infinite reasonings. Therefore, Nagarjuna's praises are not included in the collection of reasoning.

"These treatises are of two primary kinds, those which demonstrate the way things really are, dependent-origination, free from the two extremes of existence and non-existence and those which demonstrate that the path, free from these extreme views, leads to liberation."

The first type of treatise explains dependent-arising that is free from the two extremes of existence and non-existence. We should understand what is meant by the extremes of existence and non-existence. It is exactly as explained above. The extreme of existence is to hold that things exist inherently; they exist independently. By

holding such a position, one falls into the extreme of existence. The extreme of non-existence refers to the position that all phenomena, outer and inner, are utterly non-existent. If one holds this position one falls into the extreme of non-existence.

Thus, the dependent-arising taught here is one that is free from the two extremes. The texts that demonstrate dependent-arising, free from the two extremes, constitute the first type of treatise.

Those which demonstrate or teach that the path, free from these two extremes, leads to the attainment of liberation, constitute the second type of treatise. The text continues,

"The former is demonstrated in two ways: first the 'Mulamadhyamakakarika' ('Treatise on the Middle Way') refutes the thesis concocted by the reificationists."

These are the propounders of true existence which include the Mind Only school and below. They all assert true existence - that all persons and phenomena have essences - inherent existence. In 'The Treatise of the Middle Way', the thesis of persons and phenomena having inherent existence is refuted. This thesis maintains that there is inherent existence in persons and phenomena, using reasons such as arising from causes and conditions etc. Such a position of inherent existence is refuted.

Then the 'Vaidalysutra' (The Finely Woven) refutes the Nyaiyayika's (Logician's) use of their 16 categories, such as authoritative cognition (usually valid cognition) to prove that persons and phenomena have inherent existence. These two texts, 'The Treatise on the Middle Way' and 'The Finely Woven', refute inherent existence.

Next comes the text, Vigrahavyavartani (The Refutation of Objections). It responds to the following statement:

"If all phenomena lacked essence  
Your words also would lack essence.  
Thus the essence of all things  
Cannot be rejected.

which is offered against

The essence of phenomena.

Does not exist in conditions etc.

(From the first chapter of the Treatise on the Middle Way.)

This statement attracts a certain argument which is presented in the 'Refutation of Objections'.

The text continues,

"Therefore, it is a supplement to the first chapter of 'Mulamadhyamakakarika'. This shows that the meaning of words being empty of essence (inherent existence) is that they are dependently originated and it states that despite lacking essence, words can prove a thesis and refute that which is to be refuted. Thus it demonstrates that the agent and action of establishing and denying authoritative cognition and object, make sense in the system asserting essencelessness, (the absence of inherent existence). Moreover, it shows that for a school positing inherent existence, such things as valid cognition do not make any sense."

In Lama Tsong Khapa's 'Praise to Dependent Arising', he makes the statement that whatever depends on conditions must be empty of independent existence. They cannot exist intrinsically, inherently. There is no more amazing statement than this. This same text continues by stating that those proponents of true existence hold that outer and inner phenomena exist truly and yet depend on conditions. Therefore, these childish people have fallen into extreme conceptions. Their positions are refuted by the proponents of the Middle Way who are free from the bondage of conceptions of extremes. The text continues (p13)

"'Mulamadhyamakakarika' demonstrates that without essence, agency and action make complete sense."

This means that in the 'Treatise on the Middle Way' it is taught that in

the absence of inherent existence, agent and action are feasible.

"Nevertheless, in 'Vigrahavyavartani' having shown emphatically that agent and action of proof and reputation makes sense, the idea, that in this system one cannot establish one's own position, is dismissed."

This second text, 'The Refutation of Objections', specifically shows that the agent and action associated with proof and reputation are feasible. 'The Treatise on the Middle Way' shows that agent and action are feasible. In particular, the 'Refutation of Objections', demonstrates that agent and action associated with proving and refuting are feasible. Therefore, the idea that one cannot establish one's own position is overcome, is refuted.

Next, we look at another text called 'Sunyatasaptati' ('70 Stanzas on Emptiness') which was

"composed in response to an argument against a statement in the seventh chapter of 'Mulamadhyamakakarika'.

'Like a dream, like an illusion,  
Like a city of Gandharvas,  
So have arising, enduring  
And ceasing been explained.'"

To elaborate, in a dream or in a magician's spellbinding illusion, we may see horses and elephants. We may see a city of Gandhavas (smell-eaters). Although they appear to exist inherently they do not exist inherently. In the same way we should understand production, abidance and ceasing. This seventh chapter of the 'Treatise of the Middle Way' explains how, even when we are having the appearance of a dream-elephant, we know in reality, there is no elephant. It is just like a magical illusion. Outer and inner phenomena are like that; they appear to exist inherently but they do not. The text continues,

"Hence, that text is a supplement to the treatise."

In other words, the '70 Stanzas on Emptiness, is a supplement to the

'Treatise on the Middle Way'.

"It is argued by some that the refutation of the inherent existence of arising, endurance and destruction (or production, abidance and disintegration), is incorrect since authoritative sources mentioned these things."

Some people object, saying, 'Look at the Buddha's scriptures. The Buddha actually spoke about production, endurance and destruction, so why are you saying that they do not exist inherently?'

The 70 Verses on Emptiness (Sunyatasaptati) says,

"The Buddha asserts that there is or is not arising, endurance and destruction;

And that things are lower, equal or higher

In accordance with worldly convention;

But not in accordance with reality.'

Thus it responds that the Buddha presents arising, destruction etc, all in concordance with ordinary people (with worldly convention) but not as existing in reality." (as their own reality).

Why does the Buddha say there is arising, endurance and destruction when, in other scriptures, he says that they do not exist inherently? He is doing so simply to accord with worldly convention.

"After extensively refuting essence in such things as arising" (After extensively refuting inherent existence in production) that treatise (70 Stanzas) says,

"All things are

Empty by nature.

Therefore, the unexcelled Tathagata

Taught the dependent origination of phenomena.

That is the supreme meaning.

The Buddha, relying on worldly conventions,

States that all the various phenomena are

In reality designated."



Thus, the Buddha explained that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence. There is not even one atom of inherent existence. Therefore, in this text, 'The 70 Stanzas', the idea that production etc, can exist inherently is refuted in an extensive manner. The text goes on to say that the the Buddha is an unexcelled teacher who taught dependent arising.

"The Buddha is an unparalleled, peerless teacher who taught dependent arising. That is the supreme meaning."

The supreme meaning can be understood in various ways. It can, for example, refer to the exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise realising emptiness. In this case, we can take the supreme meaning to refer to emptiness itself.

"The ultimate mode of existence of things is nothing but their emptiness of essence (or inherent existence) that is, their being dependently originated. Hence, it is explained that all such things as arising are established as imputed through the power of convention."

These outer and inner phenomena are completely empty of inherent existence. However, the Buddha applies names on their bases in accordance with worldly convention, whether persons, phenomena, forms, sounds etc. All such phenomena are simply posited through being imputed by the power of convention. The text continues,

"The ultimate mode of existence of things is nothing but emptiness of the essence, (emptiness of inherent existence) that is, their being dependently originated. Hence, it is explained that all such things as arising, are established and imputed through the power of convention."

In this passage, the ultimate mode of existence of things is identified as their emptiness of inherent existence. As mentioned before, when we talk about the ultimate meaning, this refers to emptiness, which is the object of the exalted wisdom of an arya's meditative equipoise. It

is the supreme wisdom. The way it appears and the way it exists are concordant. When we say that the way it appears and the way it exists agree, we are talking about things from the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise. To an arya's meditative equipoise, ultimate truth exists in the way it appears, so there is no disagreement in the mode of appearance and the mode of abidance.

Conversely, we have conventional truth, in which the way things appear and the way they exist disagree. In this case, the consciousness involved is a conventional consciousness; it is not an arya's meditative equipoise. This consciousness is not the exalted wisdom of an arya's meditative equipoise. Due to such a consciousness being polluted by ignorance, phenomena appear one way but do not exist that way. From the perspective of conventional consciousness, phenomena appear to exist inherently when, in fact, they do not exist inherently. Therefore, there is a discrepancy between their mode of abidance and their mode of appearance. The ultimate mode of existence of things is their emptiness of inherent existence. Things do not exist inherently but they are imputed merely through worldly convention.

"'Mulamadhyamakakarika' says, 'The teachings of the Buddha are based on the two truths,' (the conventional truth and the ultimate truth). There is no phenomenon that is not included in the two truths. The text continues,

"Although this shows that emptiness of essence is the ultimate and that such things as arising are all conventionally existent, if it is not spelt out in the previous manner, the meaning of 'conventional existence' would not be understood to be established as 'existence merely through the force of nominal convention.'"

This is saying that the nature of all phenomena is empty, empty of true or inherent existence. Also there are conventional truths which are imputed through convention. If it were not spelled out in 'The 70 Stanzas on Emptiness', as we have just seen above, then the meaning

of conventional existence would not be understood to be 'existent merely through imputation of names', merely as names. Therefore, it is necessary to point this out so that the emptiness of true existence is appreciated. The text continues,

"Having offered many arguments against the non-emptiness of essence, he thus establishes an essencelessness for the purpose of showing that all these various things exist by virtue of nominal conventions and that in this system, agency and action are possible. 'Sunyatasatati' is composed to help those who have not understood this.

The other two texts show that, in order to be freed from cyclic existence, the path abandoning the two extremes of existence and non-existence is necessary. 'Yuktisastika' ('60 Verses') says,

'One does not achieve liberation through reification (existence). Nor does one free oneself from cyclic existence through nihilism' (non-existence).

Showing that there is no liberation for those who are fallen into the extremes of reification and nihilism, it further says,

'By thoroughly understanding existence and non-existence  
Great beings obtain liberation.'"

Here, we have to understand what is meant by the two extremes. In general, the word 'extreme' has many meanings. Here it has the sense of a place that you fall into. If one is walking close to the edge of a cliff, one can fall into the ravine. The idea here is that, if one holds that phenomena are inherently existent, then one falls into the extreme of existence. Conversely, if one denies the existence of phenomena, claiming phenomena to be utterly non-existent, one falls into the extreme of non-existence. This means that if we fall into the extremes, there is no chance of liberation. It is by properly understanding existence and non-existence that great beings attain liberation. The

text continues,

"This demonstrates that exalted beings, (aryas), achieve liberation from cyclic existence by understanding non-erroneously, the reality of existence and non-existence. Since neither of these can exist without depending on the other, their reality is to not have an essence established through their own nature."

Here, we have to understand that neither existence nor non-existence can exist without depending on the other. These are relative concepts. For example, we talk about samsara and nirvana. If there is no samsara – the contaminated aggregates compounded by karma and afflictions – then we cannot posit nirvana, that is a state free from the contaminated aggregates. If we do not posit nirvana, we cannot posit samsara. Therefore, these concepts are mutually dependent. This also applies to the concept of cause and effect. Other examples would be, 'friend and enemy', again dependent on each other, and 'long and short', which are also mutually-dependent concepts. All phenomena, such as agent, object and action, are mutually reliant. Similarly, we can talk about the three times: past, present and future. These are mutually dependent. Since these phenomena are mutually dependent, they cannot exist independently; they cannot exist inherently. They have to be empty of inherent existence. The text continues,

"Some argue that since the Buddha has said that samsara - an entity, (a functioning thing) - and nirvana - a nonentity, (a non-functioning thing) - exist, it makes no sense that they lack essence."

So some people object, saying that since the Buddha says that samsara and nirvana exist, they must be inherently existent. If one says that they lack inherent existence then this is unreasonable. The opponents, then, object to this doctrine of emptiness of inherent existence. Therefore, to understand these examples, we turn to the verses in, 'The Treatise of the Middle Way', ch 24, where the opponents say,

"If all this is empty, there would be neither arising nor ceasing and for you it follows that the Four Noble Truths do not exist."

It continues,

"If the Four Noble Truths do not exist, then understanding True Sufferings; abandonment of True Origins; meditation on True Cessations and realisation of True Paths, would not be tenable."

With this, the opponents are saying that if things do not exist inherently, one cannot posit the Four Noble Truths.

"In response to that, the Buddha has said that they exist in accordance with the mode of perception of an ordinary being's conventional consciousness but not in accordance with an exalted being's mode of perception of reality. The attainment of nirvana is said to be the realisation of cessation - at the state of fruition - through the wisdom, by means of which, one understands completely that cyclic existence is not essentially arisen."

The Buddha's response is that when we speak of samsara and nirvana etc, they are spoken of in terms of their mode of apprehension by childish, ordinary beings. They are not posited from the perspective of an arya's mode of perception of reality.

In brief, the Buddha's response is, when these various kinds of phenomena, samsara and nirvana etc, are said to exist, it is being described from the perspective of ordinary beings, that is, conventional consciousness. To ordinary beings, forms, sounds etc, appear to exist inherently. In accordance with their conventional consciousnesses, the existence of phenomena is spoken of. However, such does not accord with the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise, directly realising emptiness. Here, in the last sentence of the paragraph it says,

"The attainment of nirvana is said to be the realisation of cessation - at

the state of fruition - through the wisdom, by means of which, one understands completely that cyclic existence is not essentially arisen."

The wisdom that is mentioned here, is one in which one understands that cyclic existence is not produced inherently. As identified previously, cyclic existence, refers to the contaminated aggregates that have been appropriated under the influence of karma and afflictions. With a wisdom that understands that the aggregates are not produced inherently, and, by becoming familiar with wisdom and increasing it, one will be able to abandon the contaminated aggregates. One will reach the stage of the exhaustion, (cessation) of the contaminated aggregates. This state is called nirvana and one is said to have actualised cessation.

"On the contrary, if the attainment of nirvana were posited as the extinction of afflictions that exist through their own characteristics and the non-arising of further aggregates, this would be refuted on the grounds that in that case, none of these - neither the realisation of cessation, (that is nirvana) nor the extinction of afflicted emotions and aggregates - would it be possible."

This passage is related to a statement by Nagarjuna in his 'Treatise on the Middle Way' which says that  
"If emptiness is suitable then all will be possible. If emptiness is not suitable then nothing will be possible." (Ch24:14)

In other words, if the attainment of nirvana is posited as the exhaustion of the afflictions that exist by way of their own characteristics, then such a nirvana would not be possible. So if we posit nirvana as the non-arising of such aggregates that exist by way of their own characteristics, then the extinction of the aggregates and afflictions, would not be possible. To posit these, one has to do so in the context of emptiness of inherent existence.

This is the meaning of authoritative sources expounding the nirvana of the lesser vehicle as well. This actually means that what has been

elucidated in the '60 Verses of Reasoning', explains the meaning of the scriptures teaching the Hinayana nirvana. There are scriptures which teach the nirvana of the lower vehicle. In this text by Nagarjuna, the meaning that is explained coincides with what is explained in the scriptures. What is the nirvana that we are talking about here? We can talk about the Hinayana nirvana and Mahayana nirvana in terms of non-abiding nirvana. The Hinayana nirvana is the exhaustive abandonment of the afflicted obscurations. That mere abandonment is called nirvana. Having reached this mere nirvana where just the afflictive obscurations have been exhaustively abandoned, one attains the state of the arhatship of a hearer or solitary-realiser (foe-destroyer).

In terms of the Mahayana nirvana, we talk about non-abiding nirvana. Here, not only have the afflictive obscurations been abandoned, even the imprints, the latencies, have been exhaustively abandoned, through what is called, an analytical cessation. Non-abiding nirvana, then, is synonymous with Buddhahood. This passage is saying that the meaning explained in the text is also the meaning of the scriptures that teach the Hinayana nirvana.

"The rest of this treatise is written in support of this proposition. In short, if the realisation and attainment of nirvana at the stage of achieving arhathood do not imply the realisation of the way things really are, that is, ultimate truth, then the attainment of nirvana would absolutely not be possible. This is the principal reason that this fact is proved primarily through citations of the sutras of the lesser vehicle."

Here, we have to understand that when one attains the state of an arhat, one has abandoned the afflictive obscurations. This is precisely why arhats are called foe- destroyers (in Tibetan). Who do they destroy? The foes here are the afflictions because we are harmed by them. The hearer and solitary-realiser arhats have abandoned, destroyed the afflictions who are the foes. By doing so, they actualise cessation and attain nirvana.

The question now is, how do we destroy the afflictions? How do we extinguish them? In order to do this, we need to actualise the antidote.

How do we actualise the antidote to the afflictions? We have to realise reality. We have to realise suchness. The point here is that even those who strive for individual liberation - the state of foe-destroyer in the Hinayana vehicle - need to realise emptiness.

In the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, it is said that even hearers and solitary- realisers need to train in the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. Also, in Shantideva's 'Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life' (Bodhicaryavatara), it says that, according to the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, without the realisation of emptiness, there is no attainment of nirvana.

We have now finished the discussion on this text called, 'Yuktisastika' (60 Verses of Reasoning).

Next we will discuss the sixth text, 'Ratnavali' ('The Precious Garland').

'Ratnavali' demonstrates that the means to achieve high status is confident reliance and that, having cultivated that quality, one becomes a vessel of wisdom, which is the means to achieve definite goodness. To achieve high status or rebirth one needs to depend on confident reliance (more commonly translated as the faith of conviction). Based on that one can go on to achieve definite goodness, which is beatitude, liberation and omniscience.

The foundation for attaining definite goodness is a good rebirth. As Je Tsong Khapa says in his 'Condensed Meaning of the Path to Enlightenment, or 'Song of Experience', one first has to strive for a good support, a good rebirth. On that basis, one is able to make huge strides in spiritual development. Without a good rebirth it is very hard for one to strive and attain liberation. For that reason, in 'Precious Garland, it is said that with the faith of conviction one must attain a good rebirth. Once a good rebirth is attained, then with wisdom, with reasoning, one has to go on to definite goodness, which is liberation and omniscience. Therefore, there is a sequence of having the support of a good rebirth, and on that basis, having the wisdom to achieve liberation and enlightenment. In this passage it states that the means to achieve high status is the faith of conviction. So the means to achieve a good rebirth is through the faith of conviction.



The significance here is that it is not possible to prove the existence of high rebirth through reasoning. It must be done by relying on scripture. Here, 'relying on scripture' means that the scripture must satisfy certain criteria. It must be free from the three contradictions. By such a method, we can conclude that the scripture is infallible, incontrovertible and non-deceptive.

An example of such a scripture is the Buddha's pronouncement in which he says that giving is the cause of wealth, and ethics, the cause of a good rebirth. One has to check the validity of such statements by investigating whether or not the scripture is free from the three contradictions.

To do this we have to examine its subject matter. There are three types, the first, involving manifest phenomena; the second, involving slightly hidden phenomena; the third, involving very hidden phenomena. If the subject matter involves manifest phenomena or obvious phenomena, then one has to check that there is no contradiction by direct perception, that is, a valid-cogniser. If it is a slightly hidden phenomena, one has to ensure that there is no contradiction by an inferential valid-cogniser.

If the subject matter is very hidden phenomena, one has to confirm that there is no contradiction by a valid scripture. Here, one must make sure that the scripture is free from contradictions by valid cognition. An example of a scripture that is free from the three contradictions is the Buddha's teaching on the Four Noble Truths. On the basis of such investigation, one comes to understand that it is possible to attain high status, a good rebirth.

The previous statement, "'Ratnavali', demonstrates that the means to achieve higher status is confident reliance and that, having cultivated that quality, one becomes a vessel of wisdom, which is the means to achieving definite goodness," emphasises the fact that the means to achieve a good rebirth is the faith of conviction. The means to achieve liberation and omniscience is wisdom.

What exactly is this wisdom that we are talking about here? It is not just any old wisdom. The text continues,(p15)

"Wisdom is that understanding that neither the self (I), nor mine, is ultimately existent, and, consequent upon this, that when the aggregates are understood as not truly existent, then self-grasping is extinguished. Until the grasping of the aggregates as truly existent is extinguished, one does not escape from cyclic existence but once it is extinguished, one escapes."

Here we need to understand the sequence in which the two types of selflessness are indicated. First of all, 'Precious Garland' points out that the 'I' and the 'mine' are not ultimately existent; they are not inherently existent; they are not independently existent. What is being indicated here is the selflessness of persons. The text states,

"consequent upon this, that when the aggregates are understood as not truly existent, then self grasping is extinguished. Until the grasping of the aggregates as truly existent is extinguished, one does not escape from cyclic existence."

This means that one first understands the selflessness of persons and then one goes on to understand the selflessness of phenomena, in which the aggregates are understood to be free from self. The sequence of realisation, then, is first the subtle selflessness of persons, then the subtle selflessness of phenomena. However, as Je Tsong Khapa says, when one is talking about the generation of the conceptions, the conception of inherent existence of phenomena is generated first. Then the conception of inherent existence of persons is generated. Yet, when it comes to the generation of the realisation of selflessness, one realises the selflessness of persons first and then one realises the selflessness of phenomena.

### DAY 3

In Nagarjuna's treatise, 'Refutation of Objections', he makes

prostration to the Buddha for teaching dependent arising, similar to his praise of the Buddha, in his text called 'Treaties on the Middle Way'. In that stanza, he talks about how the meaning of emptiness is dependent arising and the meaning of dependent arising is emptiness. Thus, emptiness and dependent arising are inseparable. The person who realises this meaning, realises the meaning of the middle path.

Aryadeva, in his '400 Verses', makes a similar point, saying that whatever is dependent cannot be independent. This statement explains that when a phenomenon arises by depending on other factors, whether by causes and conditions, or by dependence on its parts, if it depends on other factors, then there is no possibility for it to exist independently or by its own power. Therefore, whatever depends on other factors lacks self power and cannot be independent. Since phenomena do not exist independently, to maintain a conception of phenomena as existing independently, is said to be a conception of self.

There are two kinds of conception of self. If the basis is a person, then the conception holding to the person as independently existent is called 'a conception of a self of persons'. If instead, the basis is the aggregates, then the conception holding to the aggregates as existing independently, is called a 'conception of a self of phenomena'. These two types of conception are conceptions of self. In order to put an end to these conceptions of self, we have to generate the wisdom realising selflessness.

The text continues on page 15,

"Wisdom is the understanding that neither the self (I), nor the mine is ultimately existent.

Here, we are talking about a wisdom that realises that neither the I nor the mine is ultimately existent.

Consequent upon this, when the aggregates are understood as not truly existent, then self grasping is extinguished."

There is a sequence here. First the selflessness of persons is realised. On that basis, one goes on to realise the selflessness of

phenomena. From the outset, one needs to engage in studying and listening. Then one proceeds to contemplating the meaning that has been heard - that has been understood. One cultivates that understanding through meditation. Eventually, a clear appearance, with respect to selflessness, will arise. This will lead to a realisation of selflessness.

At the beginning, the conception of a self of persons is abandoned. One first realises the selflessness of persons. After that, one realises the selflessness of the aggregates. In this way, one will come to realise the selflessness of phenomena. This is the procedure to become liberated from samsara, cyclic existence. As the text says,

"Until the grasping of the aggregates as truly existent is extinguished, one does not escape from cyclic existence, but once it is extinguished, one escapes."

So it is by realising these two types of selflessness that one leaves cyclic existence. This last statement is easy to understand. It says that if one severs the causes of cyclic existence, one eliminates the results. Once one realises the two selflessnesses, one eliminates the cause of samsara, and consequently, one escapes from the result - cyclic existence. The text continues,

"Through the view of nihilism one falls into lower realms; through the view of reificationism, one may wander in higher realms. In order to transcend both, one must understand the meaning of 'reality' - that is not based on the two extremes of existence and nonexistence."

With the view of nonexistence, with the view of nihilism, one circles in lower realms. This is because if one holds that things do not exist truly (inherently), then they must be utterly non-existent. Thus one will maintain that karma does not exist. One will cling to the wrong view of there being no virtue and no non-virtue. Virtue is what gives rise to happiness. Non-virtue is what gives rise to suffering. Therefore, by holding the wrong view that there is no virtue and no non-virtue; one

severs the root of virtue. Having cut the roots of virtue, one does not have the roots of virtue to be born in a higher realm. Consequently, one falls into the lower realms.

The text also says that through the view of reificationism (or the view of existence), one circles in the higher realms. Even though one may believe that things exist inherently, this, although not entirely a wrong view, is still one which does not accord with reality. One may still create virtue while holding to inherent or true existence. Such virtues will enable one to attain a good rebirth within cyclic existence but one is still trapped within it, and as a result, one continues to circle in samsara through karma and afflictions. Therefore, in order to free oneself from cyclic existence, one must remain unfettered by the two extremes of existence and nonexistence. In that way, one can obtain liberation from samsara.

In proving emptiness, one must be sure not to fall into nihilism, thinking that, since there is no inherent existence, things do not exist at all. One should understand that things still exist conventionally. The text continues,

"That meaning is this: since the person is imputed on the basis of the concatenation, or the aggregation, of the six elements or constituents, and since it exists neither as identical to, nor as different from them, it does not exist in reality."

Here, we have to understand the meaning of reality. This passage describes how a person is simply imputed on the aggregation of the six constituents. As Nagarjuna says in his 'Precious Garland',

"A person is not earth, not water, not fire, not wind, nor space, not consciousness and not all of them. What person is there other than these?"

Just as a person is not real due to being a composite of the six constituents, so each of the constituents is also not real. A person is simply imputed on the bases of designation. Here, we can say that the

six constituents are the bases: earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness. Thus, the person exists neither as one with the six constituents nor as different from the six constituents. In this way, a person is not independently (or inherently) existent.

Let us examine the consequences that would follow if a person were to exist inherently - either as one or different - with respect to the six constituents. Now the person and the six constituents cannot be inherently one, because if they were, the person and the six constituents would be absolutely identical. This is not the case because the person and the six constituents appear differently to one's mind. Also the person and the constituents are not inherently different. If they were to be inherently different, they would be completely unrelated but this is not the case. In fact, the person depends on the six constituents. Thus, through such examination, we arrive at the conclusion that the person does not exist inherently. The text continues,

"The aggregates and elements should also be examined in just this way."

We say that the person is imputed upon the bases of the six constituents. If we look for the person among the six constituents we will not be able to find that person. We can investigate whether the person is any one of the six constituents individually. If we say that the person is one of the constituents, there will be inconsistencies. Again, if we say that the person is each of the constituents, there will be inconsistencies.

Since the person cannot be found among its constituents, does this mean that the person does not exist at all? No, the person does exist but not in a findable way because the person is simply imputed by name. The person is simply posited by conception. The person is merely imputed by way of name and conception. The text continues,

"The demonstration of the way things really are - dependent origination - through the negation of essence in a person and in

phenomena - is also found frequently in both this and in the previous treatise."

'This treatise' refers to 'Precious Garland' and 'the previous treatise' refers to '60 Stanzas on Reasoning'. It is said that the teaching of dependent origination, in which the inherent existence of persons and phenomena is negated, can be found frequently in these two texts. The text continues,

"However, these demonstrations are also part of the primary argument showing that the path to liberation from cyclic existence absolutely requires the understanding of the meaning of reality, which does not rely on the two extremes."

In other words, the explanations in those two texts about emptiness - about dependent arising - are also part of the argument primarily showing that, in order to attain liberation from cyclic existence, one definitely needs to realise reality, a reality that is not based on the two extremes. The text continues,

"'Mulamadhyamakakarika' (Treatise on the Middle Way) and 'Sunyatasaptati' (Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness), also show that the path, realising the way things really are, eliminates ignorance and that thereafter, the rest of the limbs are eliminated."

In these two texts, not only is the path realising the way things are shown but also, that the rest of the limbs, or the consequences of ignorance, are eliminated. Here we need to understand that when we take rebirth, this is due to karma and afflictions. As is said in Nagarjuna's 'Treatise on the Middle Way', once we take rebirth, we age and then experience all kinds of suffering such as sickness, sorrow, mental unhappiness, confusion and so on. If we examine the types of unhappy experiences we have, we will understand that they all started with our birth in cyclic existence. Our birth in cyclic existence is traced back to karma. It is due to karma that we take rebirth in samsara. How

do we stop karma, the karma that projects us into samsara? To stop that karma we have to stop ignorance, as is clearly presented in the 12 links of dependent origination. Ignorance is what causes the creation of the next link, compositional action, karma. So if we want to stop karma we have to stop ignorance. How do we stop ignorance? We have to cultivate the wisdom realising emptiness.

'70 Stanzas on Emptiness' states that the path realising the way things really are, will eliminate ignorance. There is the stanza that we examined on day two, which describes how ignorance grasps at things as being inherently existent. Even though things arise from their causes and conditions, with ignorance, one holds onto things as existing independently - as existing truly.

Due to having such an ignorance, the 12 links of dependent origination come about. Because of ignorance, one creates compositional action or karma. The latency of such a karma is deposited on the consciousness. When this latency is nourished by conditions such as craving and grasping it will ripen and give the result of rebirth in cyclic existence. Once one has a rebirth in cyclic existence, one has the basis for experiencing infinite types of misery. All of these can be traced back to ignorance. In order to stop ignorance, we have to stop holding onto phenomena as inherently existent.

Therefore, we need to cultivate the wisdom that sees that phenomena are not inherently existent. Through such familiarisation, we will be able to overcome ignorance. Once ignorance is overcome, there will be no more creation of karma. Once there is no more creation of karma, there will be no more latencies of karma left on our consciousness. In that way, all the remaining links of the 12 links of dependent origination, will cease. The text continues,

"Nevertheless, it appears that although these texts primarily establish the object - the way things really are, that is, dependent origination - they do not primarily establish the subjective consciousness comprehending the way things really are, as the cause of liberation. That is because the former is more difficult to understand."



These texts establish emptiness; they do not primarily establish the wisdom realising emptiness as being the cause of liberation. Lama Tsong Khapa has written in one of his prayers, a request for blessings to be able to generate this path realising profound emptiness and dependent origination. In this stanza he says that the only medicine that can eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings is the teachings of the Buddha. Among these, the medicine that can remove the conception of extremes, is the wisdom realising emptiness.

"Here, the conception of extremes is likened to a sickness that sentient beings are afflicted by. To remove this sickness, one needs the medicine of realising profound emptiness. With this wisdom one can become liberated from these extreme views. Such an emptiness is explicitly shown in the three kinds of 'Perfection of Wisdom' sutras - extensive, medium and brief."

In this stanza, Lama Tsong Khapa requests blessings to be able to realise this path of profound emptiness - of dependent origination - that has been settled upon by the great masters such as Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Chandrakirti.

"To summarise all of this: while 'Mulamadhyamakakarika' and 'Vaidalyasutra' expound the way things really are - dependent origination - extensively refuting the opponents' theses and proofs, the 'Vigrahavyavartani' ('Refutation of Objections') shows the cogency of the Madhyamaka theory of action and agent against the argument of the antagonists, who think that since refutation and establishment are not possible in the system of those who refute in this way, that refutation of another's position and propounding one's own thesis would not be possible."

Here, these texts explain the way things are. In the first two texts mentioned, dependent origination is explained by refuting the positions of the opponents. In the third text, 'Refutation of Objections', the

Middle Way position of the feasibility of action and agent, is explained because there are opponents who think that since they (the Prasangikas) assert the emptiness of inherent existence, then, (in the systems of those who assert) inherent existence, refutation and establishment are not possible. Therefore, they cannot refute others' positions; they cannot prove their own position.

Here, we must understand the positions of inherent existence held by all the schools below the Middle Way Consequent School. The lower schools say that if phenomena do not exist inherently then there will be no karma, no actions, no results. One will not be able to posit action and agent; one will not be able to posit the 12 links of dependent origination; one will be unable to establish the Four Noble Truths; there will be no cause and effect etc.

Through the argument of the 'Refutation of Objections', Nagarjuna says, "The faults that you attribute to me are actually incurred by you, yourself." (Ch24 v15) In that way he is able to show that the presentation of action and agent in the Middle Way is feasible.

When Nagarjuna says that the faults that they attribute to him are actually incurred by themselves; what is meant by that? The opponents accuse the Middle Way (system of the) consequence school of saying that things are not inherently existent; therefore nothing is feasible. Nagarjuna replies, saying, in fact, it is when you assert that things have inherent existence that things are not feasible. You are like somebody who is riding a horse who forgets you are riding a horse, so the faults that you attribute to me are incurred by you, yourself. (Ch24 V14+15) The text continues,

"The fact established by reputation and proof - dependent origination, absence of existence through a thing's own essence - is the ultimate reality. Therefore, when 'Sunyatasaptati' explains the meaning of 'conventional existence' to be 'establishment of all the diverse phenomena through nominal engagement', it becomes comprehensible that all actions and agents make sense in terms of convention, the meaning of which is 'to be merely nominally designated'".

This is saying that in 'The 70 Verses on Emptiness', the meaning of conventional existence is explained. It really refers to how things are established through nominal conventions. In that way, one understands that all actions and agents make sense. The example given to explain the idea of nominal designation is that of a rope being mistaken for a snake. Although, in reality, there is no snake, because of the nominal imputation of the rope as a snake, the person receives the idea that there is a snake. Therefore, there is nothing that exists independently, inherently. Due to nominal convention then, phenomena are established.

Now, you may be wondering how this example of a rope that is mistaken for a snake, properly illustrates the meaning of nominal designation in this school. Although there is no snake, one imputes a snake to the rope. Similarly, although there is no person existing among the aggregates, or among the six constituents, one imputes a person. Although these two situations are similar, in that there is an imputation of something that does not exist, on the basis, the two situations are not identical in every way. This is because, even though there is no snake in reality, there is actually a self, a person, or I, existing conventionally.

How does the I or person exist? Through imputation upon the six constituents, whereas, even though the snake is imputed upon the rope, there is no snake. The difference here, lies in what is renowned in the world. It is renowned that a person is imputed on the six constituents or the five aggregates. If you were to insist that there was a snake existing in terms of the rope, then this would be disproved, by conventional valid cognisers. For that reason, even though there are similarities in these two sets of circumstance, in the case of a person being imputed on the six constituents, that is supported by worldly renown. In this way the person is imputed by name and exists simply through nominal designation. The text continues,

"The two other treatises show that such an understanding of the modes of existence of the two truths is indispensable for attaining

freedom from cyclic existence, let alone for achieving Buddhahood."

These 'two other treatises' refer to the '60 Verses of Reasoning' and 'Precious Garland'. These two texts show that understanding the two truths is indispensable for attaining liberation from cyclic existence, let alone achieving Buddhahood. By developing this realisation of emptiness, one is able to attain Buddhahood. Not only is such a realisation necessary for Buddhahood, it is also necessary for attaining liberation from samsara.

Here we need to understand that although all outer and inner phenomena are empty of inherent existence, they do exist conventionally. Therefore, this understanding of the two truths is indispensable. Now, to attain liberation from cyclic existence, as mentioned before, one needs to sever the roots of cyclic existence. In order to do that, realisation of emptiness is necessary. This point is explained clearly in these two texts - ('60 Stanzas' and 'Precious Garland'). The text continues,

"The great master, Nagarjuna, is very gracious, since he provides eyes for all those who enter the paths of the greater and lesser vehicles."

Here, he is explaining that Nagarjuna is very kind because he provides insight for those who enter the Hinayana and Mahayana. The last sentence is,

"Among all these treatises the 'Mulamadhyamakakarika' is the supreme, as it convincingly and extensively establishes the profound meaning with diverse arguments."

This means that among the six collections of reasonings composed by Nagarjuna, the 'Treatise on the Middle Way' is supreme because there is very convincing and extensive reasoning proving the profound meaning. He applied infinite reasoning to establish the profound meaning of emptiness.

With this, we have completed the third outline in this section: 'The

articulation of his treatises', or, the presentation of Nagarjuna's treatises. That brings us to the fourth outline.

#### **4 The Benefits of Aspiring to the Profound Dharma**

"Those who aspire towards such Dharma are to be applauded."

The dharma that is mentioned here refers to the dharma of profound emptiness - emptiness of true existence. Nagarjuna composed a treatise called 'Sutrasamuccaya' which is the 'Compendium of Sutras', in which he gathered many sutra citations proving emptiness. In this text, 'Sutrasamuccaya', he says,

"Through aspiration towards the profound Dharma all merits are accumulated because it accomplishes all mundane and supra-mundane benefits until one attains enlightenment."

Through aspiring to emptiness, one will accumulate all kinds of merit. Even before one becomes enlightened, one will experience mundane and supra-mundane benefits.

"As the 'Darakararatna dattasutra' says, 'Manjushri, the unskilled bodhisattva who practices the six perfections for hundreds of thousands of aeons, is exceeded in terms of the merits he cultivates, by one who listens to this Dharma with dubious mind - let alone by one who listens without doubt; and by one who inscribes and orally transmits it and carries it and teaches others extensively.'"

In this Sutra, Buddha says, 'Manjushri, when you compared the merit of somebody who is unskilled - a bodhisattva who is not skilled in means, Who practices the six perfections for many many aeons - his merit is actually exceeded by someone who even just listens to this Dharma with dubious mind.

Somebody who listens to this explanation on emptiness and thinks,

'Oh, what is emptiness?' and has many doubts; the person who listens to this explanation of emptiness with a dubious mind, creates more merit than the bodhisattva who lacks skill in means, who practices the six perfections for hundreds and thousands of aeons. Indeed, there is a statement saying that those with little merit will not even have doubts regarding emptiness but those who generate a doubt with respect to emptiness will destroy cyclic existence. The citation at the end, 'Let alone by one who listens without doubt and by one who inscribes and orally transmits it and carries it and teaches others extensively' is making clear that, if somebody who listens to this teaching on emptiness with doubt creates more merit than a bodhisattva who lacks skill in means, then of course, someone who listens to it without doubt; someone who writes it out; someone who expresses it or orally transmits it; someone who holds it in mind; someone who teaches emptiness extensively to others, will create more merit.

Next we have a citation (P16) from the 'Vajracchedika' ('The Vajra Cutter' or 'Diamond Sutra') in which the Lord asks: Subhuti, what do you think? If there were as many banks of the river Ganga as there are the number of grains of sand in the river Ganga, wouldn't there be many grains of sand on those banks? He is talking about the grains of sand on the river Ganga. There are as many banks as the number of grains of sand in the river Ganga. So wouldn't there be many grains of sand on all those banks?

"Subhuti responds, Lord the number of grains of sand on the banks of the river Ganga itself is very many, let alone the number of grains of sand there would be on as many banks as there are grains of sand in the river. The Lord further says, Subhuti, I instruct you and you should understand this: If some men and women fill up as many worlds as there are grains of sand on as many banks as there are grains of sand in the river, with seven kinds of jewels and offer them to the Tathagata, would those men and women achieve much merit? Subhuti replies, Lord they would achieve a great deal of merit. Great Sage, that would be a great amount.

The Lord then says, those who hold even a stanza from this kind of Dharma and share it with others would achieve far more merit than those people."

The meaning of this citation is similar to the previous one. Then we have another sutra, 'The Tathagatakosa Sutra' ('Tathagata Treasury Sutra'), which says,

"After recounting the ten major unwholesome deeds, it is said that sentient beings who have those ten non-virtues but who engage with the dharma of selflessness and who confidently aspire to see all phenomena to be primordially pure, will not migrate into the lower realms."

Therefore, sentient beings who commit the ten non-virtues but who engage with this Dharma of selflessness and who have faith, believing in all phenomena being primordially pure, will not fall into a lower rebirth. Another sutra, (P17) 'The Maradamanapariprccha' says,

"The monk who understands that all dharmas are completely pacified, and who understands the voidness of essence of the extreme of the origin of the infractions, who atones for the infractions committed and expiates them, nullifies even the actions with immediate results. So, what is a minor breach of propriety or a ritual omission?"

Thus, a monk who understands that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence since beginningless time, will purify even the karma of the five heinous actions with immediate retribution,(killing one's mother, father etc).

Next we have a sutra citation that is related to a person, the King Ajatashatru.

"In 'Ajatashatru Sutra' the Buddha says, I would not even call the karma of those who have committed the acts with immediate results but, who listen to this holy dharma, engage with it and aspire to

understand it, 'the karma of obscuration' or 'the karmic obscuration'".

King Ajatashatru, performed many appalling deeds, including the actions of immediate retribution: killing his father, an arhat etc, but he was able to purify his karmic obscuration and attain the path of seeing. For that reason it is said that the karma of those who have perpetrated the five heinous actions with immediate retribution, but who listen to this dharma, who engage with it; who aspire to understand it; who believe in it; that karma is not karmic obscuration.

## **5 Identifying the Vessel into which the Profound Dharma may be Introduced**

The text says, (p17 bottom)

"Some listen to discourses on emptiness and abandon it without aspiration and therefore wander into the lower realms; others, despite having aspiration, mistakenly take emptiness to mean 'nothingness' and so deprecate it. Therefore, teachers should teach depending on their understanding the specific aspirations of their students."

This is stating that there are certain beings who are not suitable vessels. Some listen to the explanations on emptiness and do not believe in it, do not have faith in it and abandon it. As a result, they wander into the lower realms. Others, who even though they have a belief in such discourses on emptiness, misunderstand them and think that emptiness means utter non-existence. Thus they deprecate it.

It further says that when teachers expound the Dharma, they need to understand the dispositions of the students and teach accordingly. But how will they know what dispositions of their students have? One must rely on their physical and verbal behaviour. Based on what can be perceived in terms of their body and speech, teachers should infer their mentality.

Chandrakirti, in his text, 'Mulamadhyavatara' ('Supplement to the Middle Way') explains what kinds of signs can be observed in a



suitable vessel for the teaching on emptiness. The text says, (p18)

"'Madhyamakavatara' tells what the signs are, by means of which this can be known:

Even when at the stage of an ordinary being, when he hears about emptiness

1. He continuously experiences inner joy.
2. With such joy his eyes become moist.
3. And the hairs of his body stand on end.

He has the seed of the mind of complete enlightenment.

He is a vessel for the teachings about reality.

He should, therefore, be shown the ultimate truth,

And he will thus obtain its consequent benefits."

This passage describes a suitable vessel as one who, even as an ordinary being, upon hearing about emptiness, three signs can be seen: He continuously experiences in a joy. Then, with such joy his eyes become moist. Tears well up in his eyes. And the hairs of his body stand on end. These are the signs of a suitable vessel for the teachings on emptiness. Thus, three signs are prescribed in this citation from Chandrakirti's text.

When these signs are present, not only does he lack the previous two faults but he also obtains the qualities of a listener. The two faults mentioned here are the two mentioned at the beginning of this fifth section. First, listening to discourses on emptiness and not believing it or abandoning it. Secondly, even though believing in emptiness, completely misunderstanding it and taking emptiness to mean utter non-existence. Thus, when these three signs are present in a person, not only does this person lack the two faults but he also obtains the qualities of a listener. This person then, is a suitable vessel for the teaching on emptiness. The text continues,

"While listening to the view of emptiness, he rejoices as though he had found a treasure and considers measures to prevent losing the view in

future lives. (So first he thinks,) 'If I fall into the lower realms due to violation of the ethical precepts, the view will be discontinued.' Thinking in this way, he takes proper vows and observes them perfectly."

Because he wants to prevent himself from losing the view of emptiness in future lives he thinks, 'If I do not practise ethics properly I will fall into the lower realms and lose the view of emptiness. Therefore, I need to observe proper ethics.' Thus he takes proper vows and observes them perfectly. He continues to think,

"Born in higher realms due to holding precepts, if I become poor, then searching for food and clothes etc will distract me from listening to discourses about emptiness regularly.' Thinking in this way he practises generosity."

Here he is thinking that if he observes ethics he will be born in a higher realm but if he is poor, in such a state, he will have to look for food, clothes and other resources. That will distract him from listening to teachings on emptiness. So he thinks that in order not to be deprived of wealth and resources in the future, in this life he must create the causes to receive resources in future lives. Therefore, in this life he engages in generosity. In that way he creates conducive conditions for his higher rebirth in the future.

"By conjoining the view of emptiness with great compassion, enlightenment is achieved, but not without it."

Here, he understands that if he simply has the view of emptiness but lacks the special method of great compassion, he will not attain Buddhahood. He will simply attain liberation from cyclic existence. Understanding this, he practises compassion. In other words, he conjoins his practice of emptiness with the special method of great compassion.

"Due to anger, a person falls into the lower realms and even if he is born in higher realms it would not please the exalted beings, as he would have an unpleasant body.' Thinking in this way, he practises patience.

Here, he understands that even though he may have compassion, if he gets angry he will fall into the lower realms. Even though he might be born in a higher realm, after that he would not be able to please the Aryas - the superior beings - as he would have an unattractive form. Understanding this, he practises patience. Therefore, even when other sentient beings harm him he does not get angry. In that way he implements the instructions of cultivating patience.

"On seeing that he can attain Buddhahood along with its unceasing, unimaginable results, by dedicating all the merits that he obtained by engaging in ethical and other such practices, he magnificently dedicates them to attaining enlightenment for all sentient beings."

Here, he realises that if he dedicates all the merits he has obtained by practising ethics, generosity, patience etc, he will be able to attain Buddhahood. Therefore, he dedicates all his merit to the attainment of unsurpassable enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. In that way, he will obtain all the immeasurable, inconceivable results of Buddhahood.

There is a sutra reference that if a drop of water falls into the ocean, that drop of water becomes inexhaustible, as long as the ocean does not dry up. Similarly, if the merit from practising ethics, generosity etc, is dedicated to unsurpassable enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, the fruit, the result of that merit, will be inexhaustible.

"Realising the predominance of bodhisattvas in teaching dependent origination, he develops obeisance to them."

He understands how important the bodhisattvas are in their role of teaching dependent origination, exactly as it is, so he develops respect

for them. There follows a citation from the 'Supplement to the Middle Way' which summarises all the benefits we have just explained. At the bottom of page 18 it says,

"A precise understanding of emptiness would lead to the approach just explained. But if one's understanding leads one to think that this reasoning refutes the system of cause and effect, then until the misconception is dispelled, there is no chance of developing a non-erroneous conviction in the reality of dependent origination, despite the fact that authoritativeness in that regard is claimed."

This is saying that if you have an accurate understanding of emptiness then the points mentioned above would occur. This means that if you understand the emptiness of inherent existence properly, you will understand that there is not the slightest independent existence. Yet you are able to understand that actions and agents are feasible and that cause and effect are feasible.

If, instead of having this correct approach, your understanding of emptiness leads you to think that cause and effect are not possible, that nothing exists, that everything is utterly non-existent, then, with such a misconception, there is no way that you can develop a stable ascertainment in the reality of dependent origination. The text continues,

"Therefore, in such a situation, not only does one lack the qualities of a listener, one also suffers adverse consequences."

This means that in this negative situation, not only are the qualities of a listener missing but also that the person will incur the flaws of a faulty listener. We have discussed the benefits of being a suitable vessel for the teachings on emptiness and we have also looked at the drawbacks of being an unsuitable vessel. On page 19, the text continues,

"Hence, one should pray that we might listen to, contemplate the

meaning of, meditate on, and aspire to realise in every cycle of rebirth, the profound system, without undermining conviction in the truth of dependent origination and of cause and effect."

As is said in the text, 'Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras', (Maitreya's 'Sutra Alamkara'), we have to engage in the threefold process of hearing, contemplation and meditation. At the beginning, we should hear explanations on profound emptiness and we should hold the meaning in our mind and then, through contemplation, we should settle upon the meaning. So we need to think about the meaning again and again until we settle upon the meaning, at which point we should meditate on it with concentration.

Here we are making prayers that we may be able to engage in this process. We should also aspire to realise this profound system - to realise these profound texts - in every rebirth, in such a way that we do not deprecate either dependent origination or cause and effect.

Thus we have completed the sections that discuss the activities for embarking on the explanation. That includes, 'The Expression of Worship' and the preliminaries etc. With that, we will begin the actual explanation.

The actual explanation is divided into three parts. At the bottom of page 21 the text continues,

We now begin the second section of the text, the principal explanation. This section has three parts:

1. The meaning of the title of the text
2. The content or meaning of the text
3. The afterword or conclusion

### **The meaning of the title of the text, 'Mulamadhyamakakarika-Prajna'**

(P22) We will look at the first of these - The meaning of the title of the text, 'Mulamadhyamakakarika-Prajna'. The first word, 'Prajna' in

Sanskrit means wisdom. 'Mula' means fundamental or root. 'Karika' means verse. 'Nama' means thus called. Here, 'Prajna' represents Prajnaparamita. The full expression is Prajnaparamita; here only a part, 'Prajna', is mentioned. As is said in the commentary to 'Prajnapradipa', since it enables one to accomplish the view of transcendental wisdom, 'Prajnaparamita' is so called. It is named after its content.

The text, 'Prajnapradipa', is written by Bhavaviveka and the commentary to it composed by Avalokitavrata. 'Prajnapradipa' explains how the 'Prajnaparamita' enables one to accomplish the modes of exalted wisdom. For that reason the text is called 'Prajna' 'Prajnaparamita'. It is named after its subject matter. In general we should know that, terminologically, 'The Perfection of Wisdom' or 'Prajnaparamita', is divided into four types:

1. The textual 'Perfection of Wisdom'
2. The path 'Perfection of Wisdom'
3. The result 'Perfection of Wisdom'
4. The nature 'Perfection of Wisdom'

Among these four terminological divisions of 'Prajnaparamita', the text here has as its subject matter, the path Perfection of Wisdom and the result Perfection of Wisdom. Because of this it is named 'Perfection of Wisdom', 'Prajnaparamita'. The text continues,

"Just as ordinarily 'middle' means free from extremes, since it avoids both extremes of existence and nonexistence etc, he calls it 'the middle'".

We have the word 'middle' or 'madhyamaka' because the subject matter of this text is profound emptiness, which is free from extremes. Since the subject matter is free from extremes, it abides in the middle. Therefore, the text is labelled 'middle', 'madhyamaka'. The text continues,

"The word 'madhyamaka' itself means 'the meaning of madhyama'. This is a taddhita construction in which 'ka' (the last syllable) denotes 'the meaning of'. The suffix 'ka' is attached because it both

demonstrates and denotes the middle path. In virtue of the grammatical category of this word, both the treatise on the middle and whatever is associated with it is called 'madhyamaka'".

In other words, another reason why this text is called 'Middle' - 'Madhyamaka'- is because it expresses things associated with the middle.

"Or as Bhavaviveka says, because it is referred to by the word 'madhyama' with the suffix 'ka' it is 'madhyamaka' philosophy (tenets)."

In this text, the Middle Way tenets system is explained. For that reason the title is, 'Madhyamaka'. When you look at the word 'tenets' ('drub ta' in Tibetan) and here translated as 'philosophy', it means 'established end'. This 'end' is also sometimes translated as 'extreme'. In the present context it means 'conclusion' - the conclusion that you establish. The word 'end' ('thaye' in Tibetan) actually has many connotations, as we shall see later. There is a citation at the bottom of page 22 which says,

"'Extreme' connotes exhaustion and the end;  
The near, positions and condemnation."

Because it expresses Middle Way tenets, it is referred to as 'Madhyamaka'. ★(The tape skips here.)

"Suppose someone asks, 'If that is the middle which avoids the two extremes then how can the statement in the 'Samadhiraja' sutra be interpreted?'"

What follows is a citation from the 'King of Meditation Sutra':

"Both existence and nonexistence are extremes;  
Purity and impurity, as well, are extremes;

Therefore, avoiding both sets of extremes  
The wise should not abide even in the middle.

"This explains how one should not abide in the middle, as propounded by the reificationists. These are the proponents of true existence who avoid partial extremes and who hold the middle, which is free from these extremes, to be truly existent; but not that there is no middle that abandons all extremes, such as existence and nonexistence."

One should not abide in the truly existent middle. The text continues,

"As 'Vyakhyayukti' ('The Explanation of Reasoning) says,  
'Extreme' connotes exhaustion and the end;  
The near, positions and condemnation.

Thus, 'extreme' connotes many meanings. However, regarding the meaning of 'extreme' in the context of the avoidance of extremes, it is as the 'Madhyamakaloka' ('The Illumination of the Middle Way' by Kamalashila) says, "If in the middle way, the mind existed at all ultimately, as an entity with its own nature, then since that would have that nature, how could fixations on permanence and impermanence be extremes? How could the correct attitude that corresponds to the way things really are be a pitfall? So this makes no sense." (p23)

'Here the object that exists as it is grasped is not the extreme and the mind is not grasping an extreme since it has the correct attitude.'

Kamalashila's citation says, 'If in the middle way..... be extremes?' We have to understand that Kamalashila is a master upholding the view of the Yogacarya Svatantrika Madhyamaka. In other words, he belongs to the Middle Way Yogic Autonomy School. In that school they hold the position similar to the Mind Only School, in which they maintain that phenomena are in the nature of mind. Kamalashila is saying that, if in the middle way, the mind existed at all ultimately, then since it would have that nature, how could the adherence to



permanence and impermanence be extremes? If one has this conception, holding the mind as existing ultimately - as an entity existing with its own nature, since that is accepted, it would not be a conception of an extreme. Thus one would not have fallen into the extreme of existence.

The passage after the citation gives an explanation. Here the object that exists as it is apprehended is not an extreme and the mind is not the conception of an extreme. Why? Because it is proper, mental engagement or proper mental attention. This means that if the mind exists ultimately, as an entity with its own nature, then that is the reality. So apprehending that, is not the mind of extreme. This is because the object it apprehends is not an extreme. If something exists in reality, we cannot say that it is an extreme. We cannot say that the mind apprehending that it is a conception of an extreme. The text continues,

"Therefore, 'extreme' in this context indicates a pitfall just as a cliff is ordinarily called extreme, and falling off it is called falling into an extreme. To be really existent is not possible even conventionally; therefore since the absence of real existence is the case conventionally, to hold that everything is not ultimately existent is not to grasp the extreme of nihilism; and to repudiate it, saying, 'Things do not exist in that way' is not to repudiate a nihilistic extreme."

This is saying that phenomena do not exist ultimately. Since the fact that the absence of ultimate existence is true conventionally, that is not an extreme. So the absence of ultimate existence is true conventionally. That is not an extreme. Thus to hold that, is not to have a conception of an extreme. Likewise, if one refutes this fact - the absence of ultimate existence - one is not refuting a nihilistic extreme because the absence of ultimate existence exists conventionally. The text continues,

"But grasping the nonexistence of the refuted object of negation as

existent in reality, is to fall into the extreme of nihilism; and repudiation of this position is the repudiation of the nihilistic extreme."

Now he (Kamalashila) is clarifying what the nihilistic extreme is, what the repudiation of the nihilistic extreme is, because before that, it explains what is not an extreme; what is not a conception of an extreme; what is not a repudiation of a nihilistic extreme. If we hold onto the object of negation (the object of refutation) as existing; as existing as its own reality; as existing inherently, when in reality, it is not, then one holds an extreme. If such a position is repudiated then it is the repudiation of a nihilistic extreme. The text continues,

"The conventional existence of phenomena, such as action and result and so forth, cannot be undermined by any valid cognition."

So the conventional existence of karma, its results, etc, cannot be denied by valid cognition. Therefore, the assertion of the non-existence of these objects and the subject that grasps them as non-existent are, respectively, the extreme of nihilism and the mind grasping nihilism. This means that if one asserts that action and result do not exist, that is an extreme of nihilism, an extreme of non-existence. The subject, or the mind that holds action and result as non-existent, would be a mind grasping nihilism or a conception holding nonexistence. The text continues,

"But saying that the Buddha is faultless is not the extreme of nihilism; and the mind grasping that, is not nihilistic."

If somebody makes a statement, 'The faults of a Buddha do not exist.' Simply saying that is not an extreme of nonexistence. Although one is talking about something nonexisting, that in itself, is not an extreme of nonexistence. Likewise, the mind holding onto that, is not a conception holding to an extreme.

Rejection of the existence of action and result is the nihilistic extreme of deprecation, and grasping the nonexistence of the refuted object of

negation, as existent in reality, is the nihilistic extreme of fabrication.

We are talking about two kinds of extreme here. One is called the extreme of deprecation; the other is called the extreme of fabrication. Now what is the difference between these two types of extreme? In the case of the extreme of deprecation, one is denying the existence of something that exists in reality. For example, one might think that if things do not exist ultimately then they do not exist at all. They do not even exist conventionally. In that way one falls into the extreme of deprecation because one is denying the existence of something that exists conventionally.

Regarding the extreme of fabrication - the extreme of superimposition - one is holding that something that exists in a certain way, in reality, actually exists in ways more than that. So one is superimposing an existence that is not there in reality. For example, phenomena exist conventionally but if you think they have an existence which is more than the conventional existence, then one has fallen into the extreme of superimposition or the extreme of fabrication. The text continues, (p23)

"Therefore, leaving aside the previously mentioned repudiation, the object and the subject - the mind that grasps phenomena as ultimately existent or existing through their own essence (or existing inherently) - are, respectively, the extreme of reification and the mind grasping it."

The object here is ultimate existence or inherent existence. That is the extreme of existence - the extreme of reification. The subject or the object-possessor, refers to the mind that holds such a position, the mind that apprehends phenomena as ultimately existent or inherently existent. Such a mind will be a conception holding to an extreme. In this way we have the object, which is an extreme of existence, and the object-possessor which is a conception holding to an extreme. The text continues,

"But accepting the existence of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion is not the extreme of reification and to grasp that is not to

reify."

Thus, if somebody says that the Buddha's wisdom and compassion exist, this is not an extreme of existence; and the mind holding that the Buddha's wisdom and compassion exist, is not a conception holding to an extreme.

"In some contexts in this text, it states that to say everything exists ultimately is to rely on the extreme of reification. Thus, one should understand that the way one falls into the extremes of nihilism and reification, through a grasping in which the grasper is harmed, is as it has been explained; but not by holding the mere literal meanings of 'existence' and 'nonexistence' to be the extremes of reification and nihilism respectively..."

This passage is saying that one has to differentiate between simply holding existence and non-existence versus holding the extreme of existence and the extreme of nonexistence. So one should not confuse the two. To say that something exists is not the same as saying that something exists inherently or exists truly. To say that something does not exist is not the same as saying that something does not exist at all - that something is utterly non-existent.

Here the text says we must differentiate these situations clearly. Merely to say that something exists, is not falling into an extreme of existence. Merely saying that something does not exist, is not falling into an extreme of nonexistence. If one thinks that by saying something exists, one falls into the extreme of existence and that by saying something does not exist, one falls into the extreme of nonexistence,

"the abandonment of which would be to rely on the so-called theory of 'neither existence nor nonexistence.'"

Thus, if you think that existence means 'extreme of existence' then it does not exist. If nonexistence means 'the extreme of nonexistence' then it should not be non-existence. In such a case, one is not able to

assert either existence or nonexistence because either case leads to extremes. Thus, one would end up with the system called 'neither existence nor nonexistence'. The text continues, (p24)

"And because of this, this careful editing of the translations of 'there is no form', 'there is no sound' etc, is just wasted effort!

The treatise is named 'Fundamental' (or 'Root') since it is like the body, the complete, not just the partial, basis of all other treatises."

This is like the body or the main basis of all the other treatises (the other collections of reasoning).

"Verses' means that the entire text is a metric composition (Recall that this word 'verses' appeared in the title) but does not mean 'chapter' as it would generally be read. This treatise has 449 verses and 27 chapters."

This brings us to the next section - '**The Content of the Text**' or the meaning of the text, which is divided into three parts:

1. Praising the Buddha for teaching dependent origination free from the extremes.
2. How to interpret dependent origination as free from the eight extremes.
3. Prostrating in remembrance of his great kindness and teaching that.

This brings us to the 'Expression of Worship' of Nagarjuna's 'Treatise on the Middle Way' which appears at the bottom of page 24:

"I prostrate to the perfect Buddha  
The best of all teachers, who taught that  
That which is dependent origination is  
Without cessation, without arising,  
Without annihilation, without permanence,  
Without coming, without going,

Without distinction, without oneness  
And peaceful - free from fabrication."

In this 'Expression of Worship', Nagarjuna pays homage to the Buddha, who is referred to as the best of all teachers. Indeed the Buddha is a peerless teacher because he is able to explain the meaning of emptiness as dependent arising and the meaning of dependent arising as emptiness.

Having realised the reality of phenomena - that all outer and inner phenomena are empty of inherent existence - he explained it, exactly as it is, to the trainees. As well as that, he conquered the four kinds of maras or demons. Through his perfect seeing, he is a peerless knower. In this stanza Nagarjuna makes prostrations to such a peerless teacher, a peerless knower. In this 'Expression of Worship' there is also the negation of the eight kinds of objects. In this way he pays homage to the Buddha.

End of day 3

Day 4

On page 24 we see the outline - **The meaning of the text** - which is divided into three sections:

First - Praising the Buddha for teaching dependent origination, free from extremes.

Second - How to interpret dependent origination as free from the eight extremes.

Third - Prostrating in remembrance of his great kindness in teaching that.

Regarding the first of these, we are going to look at the 'Expression of Worship' in which the Buddha is praised for his teaching of dependent origination, free from the extremes of cessation, arising etc. This section is divided into two parts:

The first is the general meaning.

The second is the supporting points or the meaning of the branches.

The 'General Meaning' is also divided into three parts:

1. How this statement contains the content, purpose and ultimate purpose of the treatise and their relation to each other.
2. How the basis possesses the eight attributes.
3. Rebutting others' refutations.

The first of these explains how this statement - the Expression of Worship - contains the four properties:

1. The content or the subject matter
2. The purpose
3. The essential purpose or the ultimate purpose
4. The relationship to each other

On page 25 the text continues,

"The master, having expressed the greatness of the teacher for teaching without distortion, the entire content of the treatise to be explained, intends to venerate him for teaching the content inseparable from the essence of dependent origination and says, 'I prostrate to' etc, so as to be able to compose the treatise."

The meaning of this passage is: the master Nagarjuna, having expressed the greatness of the teacher, the Buddha, for teaching in a very accurate manner, without the slightest error, the entire content of the treatise that is to be explained, venerates the Buddha.

Here, it describes the Buddha as being inseparable from the essence of dependent origination. So even the teacher of dependent arising himself, is also a dependent arising. He is also empty of inherent existence; he also relies on causes and conditions. He is completely

empty of intrinsic existence.

Here Nagarjuna says, 'I prostrate to' etc, so as to be able to compose the treatise. This means that he expresses his worship in order to complete the composition. The text continues,

"Here, dependent origination characterised by the eight attributes, unceasing etc, is the content of the 'Fundamental Wisdom'".

When we talk about the content of the 'Fundamental Wisdom', we are talking about the subject matter of Nagarjuna's treatise on the Middle Way. Within the 'Expression of Worship', we actually see the subject matter of the entire treatise comprising 27 chapters. Indeed, the corpus of the entire text is encapsulated in it. In the stanza at the bottom of page 24, it talks about dependent origination as being without cessation, without arising, without annihilation, without permanence, without coming, without going, without difference, without oneness; and peaceful free from fabrication.

When we talk about peaceful, free from fabrication, we are actually talking about the state of nirvana or liberation - the state of true cessation. Being peaceful and free from fabrication or elaboration, there is no conception of true existence. Not only is such a state free from the conception of true existence, it is also free from dualistic appearances. Dualistic appearances can be understood as being of several types:

There is no dualistic appearance of the object of negation.

There is no appearance of conventionalities.

There is no appearance of subject and object.

Such is the state of sensation. The absence of dualistic appearance occurs to the mind directly realising emptiness. Thus, the state of pacification is one in which all such dualistic appearances have been pacified. In addition, knowledge, obscurations and afflictive obscurations, along with all their latencies, are pacified. The state of pacification is nirvana; it is liberation; it is true cessation.

By indicating this, trainees are shown how to go about practising. They need to understand the meaning of the text. They need to refute



inherently existent cessation, arising, annihilation, permanence etc. On the basis of directly realising the emptiness of inherent existence, they will be able to eventually obtain the state of pacification the state of Buddhahood. For that reason the text says,

"The liberation characterised by peace and freedom from all the fabrication is the ultimate purpose."

As explained above, such a state of nirvana, of pacification, of true cessation, is the ultimate purpose, the essential purpose.

We have covered the subject matter of the text. We have also covered the essential purpose of the text. Among the four properties of the text we shall now look at the purpose.

"In 'Prasanapada' (Chandrakirti's 'Clear Words'), it is said that the homage verse reveals the content and the ultimate purpose of the treatise. This is because the verse presents dependent origination as possessing eight attributes, and liberation, as free from fabrication. However, he is not of the view that this verse shows that this is the content and ultimate purpose of the treatise because where it says, 'Whatever.....free from fabrication' is meant to state simply that the teacher taught this."

This is a clarification of the two properties that we discussed earlier: the subject matter or content, and the essential or ultimate purpose. In the 'Prasanapada' it says that the subject matter and the essential purpose are indicated by the 'Expression of Worship'. However, it does not say that the subject matter is dependent origination characterised by the eight attributes. Likewise, it does not say that the essential purpose is pacification - freedom from elaborations. So, although it talks about the eight characteristics - dependent origination characterised by the eight attributes - it also talks about peace - freedom from fabrications. It does not identify these as the subject matter and the essential purpose respectively. Rather, these are mentioned as praise to the Buddha.

"The purpose of the treatise is to eliminate doubts, misunderstandings, cognitive errors, mistaking the respective meanings of definitive and interpretable teachings, and to enable the reader to comprehend them properly."

We have already spoken about the subject matter and the essential purpose. Now the text explains that 'the purpose is to eliminate doubts....interpretable teachings'. The purpose of the text is to enable trainees to eliminate their misconceptions regarding the correct purport of definitive-meaning teachings and interpretable-meaning teachings, as explained by the Middle Way Consequent School. In that way, they will be able to understand the meaning of definitive and interpretable teachings accurately.

Now we will look at the relationship of the fourth of the four properties.

"The content of the text is presented for this purpose. The dependency of the purpose of the treatise and the dependency of the ultimate purpose on the purpose of the treatise, is the relation that is not explicitly discussed, though it is implied."

In other words, the purpose depends on the treatise. The purpose which is to cause trainees to eliminate doubts, misunderstandings etc, and to enable them to understand the meaning properly, is dependent on the subject-matter of the treatise. The essential purpose, in turn, is dependent on the purpose. The essential purpose or the ultimate purpose, as we have discussed, is to attain peace and freedom from fabrication, as mentioned in the 'Expression of Worship'. For the intended trainees to attain such a liberation or nirvana, they need to listen to the text, to contemplate its meaning and in that way, be able to comprehend it through valid cognition. Through such a process, they will attain peace - nirvana. Therefore, we can see that the essential purpose depends on the purpose of the treatise. We can see that each of the later qualities depends on the former qualities. Thus,

the purpose depends on the subject-matter and the essential purpose depends on the purpose. It is said that even though this relationship is not explicitly indicated, it is implied.

What we have just described is the four properties of Nagarjuna's 'Treatise on the Middle Way'; the subject-matter; the purpose; the essential purpose and the relationship. In fact, we can even look at the four properties in relation to such a statement regarding the four properties of Nagarjuna's 'Treatise on the Middle Way'.

So the subject-matter of this statement on the four properties of the 'Treatise on the Middle Way', is actually the subject matter. That subject matter is the four properties of the 'Treatise on the Middle Way'.

The purpose is to cause trainees to engage in hearing and contemplation. Based on that, there is the essential purpose of the trainees acquiring total comprehension of the text. The relationship is as before, each of the later properties is dependent on the earlier property.

The 'Commentary' discussing the last line of the 'Expression of Worship': 'peaceful - free from fabrication' says: 'When one perceives the way dependent origination really is, there is no engagement of mind or mental processes.' (The mental processes here refer to mental factors.) 'Engagement' in this context, according to 'Madhyamakavatarabhasya' Chandrakirti's self-commentary to the 'Supplement to the Middle Way', means 'wandering', as it is said that a wandering of the mind and its mental episodes (or mental factors) are stopped.

When we spoke about freedom from fabrication earlier on, we said that this was a state free from dualistic appearances. Dualistic appearances are of three types:

1. the object of negation, true existence
2. conventional appearances
3. appearance of subject and object

When we look at the exalted wisdom of an arya's meditative equipoise, all three kinds of dualistic appearances are stopped.

However, if one arises from the meditative equipoise and enters 'subsequent attainment', to the reasoning consciousness of subsequent attainment, not all three dualistic appearances have been stopped. Although we may say that the object of negation is negated, there are conventional appearances. So the 'freedom from fabrication' in this context, would not include all the factors, as we have seen earlier in the case of the meditative equipoise of an Arya. In this context, we have to understand what 'stop' means. As the commentary says,

"There is no engagement of mind or mental factors."

We have to understand whether this literally means that mind and mental factors have ceased. 'Prasanapada' ('Clear Words') says in this regard,

"Since conceptual thought is the wandering of mind, the way things really are, being free from that, is not conceptualised. Sutra says, 'What is the ultimate truth? Where there is no wandering of mind there is no need to talk about words.'(Bodhisattvapitaka-sutra)"

In other words, when we talk about the cessation of mind and mental factors, we are talking about the cessation of conceptions. If we consider the total cessation of conceptions, then this exists only in a Buddha. However, even in the exalted wisdom of an arya's equipoise, there are no conceptions. In terms of the types of consciousness that are free from such conceptions, we can posit the exalted wisdom of an arya's meditative equipoise. Therefore, this can exist in non-buddhas. However, in the context of total cessation, only a Buddha is completely free from conception.

The last statement from the sutra says, "What is the ultimate truth? Where there is no wandering of mind there is no need to talk about words." In other words, where there is no wandering of the mind, where there are no conceptions, what need is there to mention that there are also no words?

We have said that for an omniscient mind there is no conception at all. As an arya's meditative equipoise directly realises emptiness, there are likewise, no conceptions.

As said by Shantideva, in the Wisdom chapter of 'Bodhisattvacaryavatara' ('A guide to the Bodhisattvas Way of Life'), the ultimate is not an object of utilisation of a mind with dualistic appearances. Rather, the ultimate is the object of utilisation for a mind in which conventional appearances have vanished. In other words, the ultimate truth is an object of a non-conceptual mind.

The explanation continues on page 26,

"As he quotes this sutra he does not mean that there is no insight (Chandrakirti is not saying that there is no exalted wisdom.) but instead he demonstrates that the wandering of conceptual thought stops. The meaning of the statement that the conventional designation of subject and object stops, is that the designation of these two, stops from the perspective of meditative equipoise but it does not mean that the meditative equipoise and the ultimate truth are rejected as subject and object. This is because their being subject and object is not posited from the perspective of analytic insight but from the perspective of conventional understanding."

This means that from the perspective of a consciousness directly perceiving reality, there is only emptiness. There is no appearance of the subject and object. In other words, subject and object are not posited from the perspective of meditative equipoise directly realising emptiness.

Since the object - emptiness, and the subject - the consciousness directly realising emptiness, are not posited from the perspective of analytic insight then what posits it? They are posited from the perspective of conventional consciousnesses. The text continues,

"When these two perspectives are distinguished, many such similar doubts will be eliminated."

What are these two perspectives? The perspective of analytic insight and the perspective of conventional consciousness. We need to be able to differentiate between these two perspectives. If we are able to do that we will be able to eliminate many similar doubts. Here we have a doubt,

"Suppose someone asked, 'In the system of those who assert that both the sravakas and pratyekabuddhas realise both selflessnesses, the content, purposes of the treatise and their relations to each other as expounded in the 'Prasanapada' would be applicable to both greater and lesser vehicles. So, is the audience of this text general, including those belonging to both vehicles?'"

This person is thinking that, according to the Middle Way Consequence School (Prasangika Madhyamika system), even the sravakas (hearers) and pratyekabuddhas (solitary realisers) need to realise both types of selflessness, the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena, in order to attain liberation from cyclic existence because in the system of the Consequence School, without such realisation, one is not able to abandon the conception of self. Without abandoning the conception of self, there is no way to cut the root of cyclic existence; there is no way to attain liberation. Since it is the case that both hearers and solitary realisers need to realise the two types of selflessness, they also need to realise the subject matter of this treatise. They need to realise that there is no inherently-existent cessation, production etc. They also need to realise the purpose of the treatise. They are supposed to eliminate their misconceptions through hearing, contemplation etc and then realise the relationships of the various properties mentioned earlier. In such a case, does this treatise have such Hinayana practitioners in mind? Are the hearers and solitary realisers the intended trainees of this text?

In response to this doubt, 'Madhyamakavatara-bhasya' (Chandrakirti's self commentary to the 'Supplement to the Middle Way') says,

"The selflessness of phenomena is presented briefly in the teachings of the lesser vehicle but it is presented extensively in the teachings of the greater vehicle. Therefore, to prove that the teachings of the greater vehicle are not redundant (or not meaningless) he quotes from 'Lokatitastava' (Nagarjuna's 'Praise of the Supramundane'):

"You have said that there is no liberation  
So long as the absence of representation is not realised  
( 'The absence of representation' can also be translated as  
signlessness.)  
So long as signlessness is not realised.  
Therefore you have presented it  
In entirety in the greater vehicle."

The meaning here is that the emptiness of inherent existence, or the selflessness of phenomena, is necessary for Hinayana practitioners. It is presented in the teachings of the Hinayana. Does this mean that the teachings of the Mahayana are then meaningless? You would be presenting what had already been presented. The answer is 'No' because although selflessness of phenomena is presented in the teachings of the Hinayana, it is presented only briefly. When selflessness of phenomena is presented in the teachings of the Mahayana, they are presented in a very extensive manner, using infinite arguments. For that reason Nagarjuna says, 'You have said that there is no liberation so long as signlessness is not realised.' 'Signlessness' here, is taken to mean the three doors liberation. Particularly, it can be taken to mean just emptiness.

'You have said that there is no liberation' as long as emptiness is not realised. 'Therefore you have presented it in its entirety in the greater vehicle,' This means that the Buddha presented emptiness extensively, using infinite reasonings in the Mahayana.

Now another way of interpreting this citation from Nagarjuna's 'Praise of the Supramundane' - 'Therefore, you have presented it in its entirety in the greater vehicle' is to say that the Buddha presented the selflessness of phenomena in the Hinayana teachings but he did so in

a brief way because only the afflictive obscurations need to be abandoned. Even though he presented it in a brief way, the complete antidote, necessary to abandon the afflictive obscurations, was presented.

"Accordingly, in this treatise, there is no special feature of the greater-vehicle teachings besides the view. However, since it extensively explicates the selflessness of phenomena, there is a difference in the intended audience."

Therefore, it is saying that the intended trainees of this treatise on the Middle Way are just the Mahayana lineage-holders or lineage-bearers. The hearers and solitary-realizers are not the intended trainees of this treatise. There is no special feature of the teachings of the Mahayana mentioned in this treatise besides the view of emptiness. In other words, this treatise does not present the extensive deeds or the vast deeds. It only talks about the profound view. There is no discussion about how to generate bodhicitta or how to develop great compassion. There is no presentation of the ten bodhisattva bhūmis (the ten bodhisattva grounds) etc. This is because the intended trainees, in this case, the Mahayana lineage-bearers, mean that the profound view is presented extensively using infinite reasonings.

Regarding this last point, it is said that in the treatise, no special feature of the teachings of the greater vehicle is mentioned beside the view. It only talks about the profound view, emptiness, explicitly. There is no mention of bodhicitta, compassion etc. for that reason, when one looks at Chandrakīrti's text, 'Madhyamakavatara' ('Supplement to the Middle Way'), it complements Nagarjuna's 'Treatise on the Middle Way'. In what manner does it supplement Nagarjuna's 'Treatise on the Middle Way'? It makes explicit the extensive deeds; bodhicitta, the ten grounds, great compassion etc. The text continues,

"The 'Prasanapada' also mentions the total absence of sufferings like birth and death  
as the meaning of 'peaceful'".



That brings us to the next outline: (p26)

## **How the basis possesses the eight attributes**

"Here, in this context, the 'Commentary' (The 'Commentary' always refers to 'Prasanapada') says that dependent origination, referred to as the basis (the basis of attributes), is the dependent origination of compounded phenomena."

If we take dependent origination or dependent arising to mean origination that depends on causes and conditions, then the basis of the attributes will just be compounded phenomena. However, there is a way to interpret dependent origination more broadly. The text continues,

"'Contact' (or meeting); 'dependence' and 'reliance' are said to be synonymous. The etymological meaning of 'dependent' is applicable to every phenomenon.

In other words, when we use the etymological meaning of dependent, it applies to both compounded and un-compounded phenomena. 'Origination' has two meanings: 'generation' which is not applicable to other than compounded phenomena; however, 'coming into existence dependently' is also presented as a meaning of 'origination' in the following passages.

In other words, we can interpret the word 'generation' or 'production' more broadly so as to mean, 'coming into existence'. In that case, even un-compounded phenomena will be included as the basis of attributes. Nagarjuna's 'Treatise on the Middle Way' says,

"Agent depends upon action;  
Action depends on the agent as well.  
Apart from dependent arising,

One cannot see any cause for their existence."

Here, we are talking about a dependence that is not limited to dependence on causes. We are not talking about production from causes. We are talking about mutual dependence, in the sense that to posit an agent we need an action. To posit an action we need an agent. Thus, apart from dependent arising, one cannot see any cause for their existence. This kind of dependent arising is not one where you talk about a cause producing a certain result. The explanation, (p27)

"Although this says that the agent exists depending on action; action is not the producer of the agent. While it is said that this reasoning is applied to other phenomena - knower and known and thesis and proof are said to be interdependently arisen - these cannot each be the producer of the other."

We can talk about a knower and an object known as being mutually dependent, as being dependent arising but we are not saying that one is the producer of the other. Likewise, with thesis and proof. Again, these are mutually dependent but we cannot say that one is the producer of the other. Here, we are trying to understand that there is a mutual dependence in which the two factors are not in a cause and effect relationship, as mentioned with knower and known. The object that is known is posited by depending on a knower. The knower is posited in dependence on an object to be known. Likewise with thesis and proof - the proposition to be proved and the reason. If we have a proposition, this is posited in dependence on the reason that proves it. The reason that proves it is posited in dependence on the proposition that it is to be proven. These are not cause and effect relationships.

Similarly, we can talk about long and short. Long and short are posited in mutual dependence but we cannot say that long and short have a cause and effect relationship. Similarly with 'this side' and 'that side'. These are mutually dependent but again not cause and effect. 'Friend and enemy' are mutually dependent concepts; they are not

cause and effect.

"'Ratnavali' (Nagarjuna's 'Precious Garland') says, 'When there is this, that arises,  
Just as when there is short, there is long.'"

This again illustrates the importance of mutual dependence that is not cause and effect.

"Though it says that, the short is not producer of the long. Whatever is arisen, depending on its causes and conditions, must be a thing, (must be a functioning thing, an impermanent phenomenon) except for cessation."

Here, cessation refers to a result that is a separation. This is not an actual result. It is simply imputed as a result. In fact, it is permanent. This is something that is induced by an uninterrupted path. Due to the force of the uninterrupted path, in the next instant, true cessation is obtained but this true cessation is not a compounded phenomenon, is not an impermanent phenomenon. It is imputed as a result. Thus,

"Whatever is arisen, depending on its causes and conditions, must be a thing, except for cessation. Though dependently-arisen phenomena other than these arise, depending on others, the things on which they depend are not their causes and conditions."

Though the dependently-arisen phenomena, other than permanent phenomena, arise depending on others, the things on which they depend are not their causes and conditions. To illustrate this, let us take the example of space. If there is space, we can talk about the emptiness of space. Space and the emptiness of space are mutually dependent. Even though the emptiness of space is posited on the basis of space, space is not its cause. One cannot say that the cause of the emptiness of space is space because the emptiness of space is posited due to space existing.

Likewise, when we speak about pot and the emptiness of pot, though the emptiness of pot is posited because there is pot, we cannot say that pot is the cause of the emptiness of pot. We have to understand that when we talk about dependent arising, we are not simply talking about depending on causes and conditions. That is just a coarse level of understanding dependent arising.

We can define dependent arising in terms of depending on parts. That would be a subtler understanding of dependent origination. As Nagarjuna says in his 'Treaties on the Middle Way', " All phenomena depend on their parts and there is no phenomenon and that is not dependent on parts." Because all phenomena are dependent on other factors, they cannot be independent. Therefore, all phenomena are empty of independent existence.

Here, we should understand that all outer and inner phenomena have parts, regardless of whether they are permanent or impermanent. If one understands dependent arising on this subtle level, one will be able to apply dependent arising to both permanent and impermanent phenomena.

Next we discuss another idea related to the words of the 'Expression of Worship',

"Since the eight - cessation etc - exist conventionally, they cannot be refuted

without supplying a modifying phrase."

If we look at the actual wording of the 'Expression of Worship' on page 24, we will see that it talks about dependent origination being without cessation, without arising, without annihilation, without permanence, without coming, without going, without difference and without oneness.

Here, we need to add a modifying phrase because indeed there is cessation; there is arising etc, conventionally. Although it explicitly says, 'There is no cessation; there is no arising' etc, these have to be qualified with the word 'ultimately'. Thus, 'There is no cessation ultimately.' 'There is no arising ultimately,' etc. The text continues,

(p27)

"In this context, 'Prasanapada' says that the modifying phrase is 'in accordance with an exalted wisdom, in terms of which, such things as cessation do not exist.' In a later context, the 'Commentary' says, It is not in accordance with the nature of the object of uncontaminated wisdom, free from the mists of ignorance."

We need to qualify the explicit wording seen in the 'Expression of Worship'. Although it says, 'without cessation', it actually refers to 'without ultimate cessation'. 'Without arising' means 'without ultimate arising' etc.

Another way of understanding the explicit wording in the 'Expression of Worship' is to realise that there is no cessation, no arising, etc, from the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise directly realising emptiness. This is what this text, 'Clear Words' is saying. It says, 'the modifying phrase is in accordance with the exalted wisdom, in terms of which, such things as cessation do not exist.'

In other words, when it is said that there is no cessation, it means that there is no cessation in terms of an arya's exalted meditative wisdom directly realising emptiness. The text continues,

"It is not in accordance with the nature of the object of uncontaminated wisdom, free from the mists of ignorance."

Thus, if we have a consciousness that is contaminated with the mists of ignorance - the cataracts of ignorance - then we will not be able to see emptiness. We will not be able to see that there is no cessation or arising etc.

Whatever appears to arya's meditative equipoise is true because the way it exists and the way it appears is concordant. When we talk about what is a truth, we have to examine what phenomena is, such that the

way it appears and the way it exists agree. Here we must understand that besides emptiness - besides ultimate reality - nothing exists the way it appears.

When we talk about the consciousness to which only truth appears, we are talking about an arya's meditative equipoise. All other consciousnesses, or conventional consciousnesses, are mistaken. Why? Because they are not free from the mists of ignorance. They are polluted by the cataracts of ignorance. Thus, the object that we need to negate is inherent existence or independent existence.

From the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise, there are no such appearances; there are no appearances of conventionalities at all. For all other consciousnesses that are not an arya's meditative equipoise directly realising emptiness, there is a factor of mistake; there is an appearance of true existence. Finally he says, (bottom p27)

"Thus he refers to the wisdom free from the contamination of illusions of dualistic appearance. Therefore, one should consider dependent origination, which has cessation etc, as the basis, and having done so, one should consider the modifying attributes applied to it, to be the eight qualities - the non-existence of cessation etc - in accordance with the nature of the object of the uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise."

In other words, we consider dependent origination as the basis of the attributes. What attributes does it have? It has the attributes of non-existence of cessation; non-existence of arising etc, 'in accordance with the nature of the object of the uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise.'

This lack of cessation, lack of arising, that we describe as attributes of dependent arising, must be qualified. The nonexistence of cessation etc, are in accordance with the perspective 'of this uncontaminated wisdom of meditated equipoise.'

Here we need to differentiate between an innate misconception of reality and what is called an intellectually-acquired misconception of

reality. What appears in the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise is only ultimate truth. Thus, the conception of true existence, the conception of things existing ultimately, is something that we have innately. For example, the conception we have of a person as existing by way of its own character, is something that we have had since beginningless time. However, if somebody holds that there is ultimate existence in the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise then that is not an innate misconception. As Lama Tsong Khapa says in his 'Uma Gompa Rabsel' (The Illumination of the Thought), this is an intellectually- acquired misconception.

Let us turn to page 28 in the English translation. Here is a new section called,

### **Rebutting others' refutations**

This section has two parts, the first, rebutting the arguments against the thesis that cessation and so forth do not exist essentially (do not exist inherently); the second, refuting the argument regarding the number of attributes and the order in which they are presented.

Regarding the first of these, this section begins with a qualm or argument from someone. The text says, (p28)

"Suppose someone argued as follows: If such a modifying phrase is applied, that which exists in accordance with the nature of the object of the uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise would ultimately exist. This would be inconsistent with the fact that the ultimate truth exists from that perspective. This would be inconsistent with or contradictory to the fact that the ultimate truth exists from that perspective.

Besides that, from the perspective of that wisdom, since there is an imperishable reality, there is permanence."

This person is saying that the wisdom that we are discussing is an uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise realising emptiness.

Since emptiness is the object of this consciousness and emptiness is permanent, there is permanence in the perspective of this wisdom.

"There is also oneness and difference and the annihilation of afflictive mental states. Therefore, it is inappropriate to say that their non-existence, from the perspective of that wisdom, is the characteristic of dependent origination."

The opinions expressed by this person are actually mistaken. The text says,

"This objection arises due to a failure to understand the meaning of nonexistence in accordance with the nature of the object of the wisdom of meditative equipoise; therefore that needs an explanation."

Indeed, as Lama Tsong Khapa points out in his, 'Lekshey Nyingpo' ('The Essence of Eloquence'), a treatise differentiating the definitive and interpretable meanings,

"There are many previous Tibetan scholars who have made similar mistakes."

They think that since what is established for an arya's meditative equipoise directly realising emptiness is an ultimate truth, that object must exist ultimately because whatever exists for an arya's meditative equipoise is a truth. Therefore, it must exist ultimately.

Some other scholars have made the mistake of saying that since it is an arya's meditative equipoise then it cannot have an object because if it has any object at all, that object would be truly existent. In our system, since true existence is refuted, the arya's meditative equipoise cannot have any object. We can see that these are mistakes that arise from a failure to understand the meaning of non-existence from the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise.

The fact that emptiness or ultimate truth is established for an arya does not mean that the ultimate truth exists ultimately. In fact, an ultimate truth does not exist ultimately. Whatever is established for an arya's meditative equipoise is necessarily a truth, in the sense that the



way it appears and the way it exists is concordant.

We need to understand that non-existence, in accordance with the nature of the object of the wisdom of meditative equipoise, applies to conventional truths. Conventional truths are non-existent in accordance with the nature of the object of the wisdom of meditative equipoise. This is because conventional truths are not truths. The way they appear and the way they exist do not agree.

"In 'Prasannapada', Chandrakirti's 'Clear Words', (a commentary on Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle Way), it is said that the presentation of such things as the arising associated with dependent origination is not in accordance with the nature of the object of the uncontaminated wisdom of those who are free from the mists (cataracts) of ignorance. Then in what way does it exist? It exists by virtue of being the object of the consciousness of those whose wisdom eye is clouded by the mist of ignorance. With regard to the perception of the way things really are, the Lord said, "This is the supreme truth since it is the non-deceptive fact - nirvana."

When we talk about arising, associated with dependent-origination, or when we talk about production being dependent-arising etc, such things are not presented from the point of view of an arya's meditative equipoise. These are conventional truths that are posited from the perspective of the consciousness of those whose wisdom eye is clouded by the mist of ignorance. In other words, it exists from the perspective of conventional awareness that is polluted by ignorance, that is obscured by the cataract of ignorance.

As we have mentioned before, Shantideva, in his 'Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life', has said that the ultimate is not the object of utilisation of a conventional awareness. Rather, it is the object of a consciousness that has dualistic appearances.

The citation from 'Clear Words' ends with a statement from the Buddha, in which he says, "This is the supreme truth since it is the nondeceptive fact - nirvana. The expression "non-deceptive" refers to the fact that something is not a falsity, in that the appearance and the

mode of abidance agree. This is something that is true because it exists the way it appears. Conventional truths are not non-deceptive because the way they appear and the way they exist are discordant. Therefore, only ultimate truths are truths because they are the object of an awareness to which all dualistic appearances have vanished. So we say that ultimate truth is truth; it is suchness; it is reality. This fact is also underlined in Nagarjuna's "60 Stanzas of Reasoning" in which he says that nirvana is the only truth because there is no falsity involved; the way it appears and the way it exists are concordant. The text continues, (last para. p28)

"As he has said here, if there could be no uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise, then we could not distinguish between what is explained in accordance with the vision of that wisdom and what is not so explained. On the other hand, if such wisdom is possible, then one with that wisdom does not apprehend any object other than the way things really are, and since an uncontaminated wisdom without an object is not possible, it must perceive the way things really are. Given that, how could it make sense to say that to exist from the perspective of that wisdom or to exist as the nature of that object is to exist ultimately?"

The above passage is saying that it is with the uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise of an arya that we can explain what is being seen in accordance with that wisdom and what is not seen in accordance with that wisdom. With such a wisdom, one is able to know the truth; one is able to know the way things really are. This is not to say that what is seen by that wisdom is ultimately existent. Here we are saying only emptiness appears to this non-conceptual exalted wisdom of an arya's meditative equipoise. This does not mean that emptiness is truly existent; it does not mean that emptiness is ultimately existent. The text continues, (p29 top)

"Then, in the context of refuting the claim that such things as cessation exist in dependent origination as it really exists, why is it

demonstrated that such things as cessation do not exist in accordance with the nature of the object of the uncontaminated wisdom?"

Here the question is, why do we say that cessation and so forth do not exist for the arya's meditative equipoise?

"On examining whether or not the basis on which such things as cessation are instantiated - dependent origination - exists as cessation etc., one examines whether or not the essence or nature of the basis is to exist as cessation etc. It is denied that this is the case. This is the meaning of denying that such things as cessation are instantiated in dependent origination as it really exists."

Here we are undertaking an investigation to discover whether or not dependent-origination, which is the basis of the attributes, in which cessation, arising and so forth, are established, exists AS cessation, arising and so forth. We want to see whether or not it is the nature of dependent arising to exist as cessation, arising and so forth. Upon investigation it is refuted. This is the meaning of refuting such things as cessation, etc being established in dependent origination as really existing. The text continues, (p29 para 2)

"If such things as the cessation associated with dependent origination were its nature, then such things as cessation would exist as the nature of the object of uncontaminated wisdom. What we have been calling 'the nature of the object of uncontaminated wisdom' just is the nature of dependent origination. So, this means that none of such things as cessation exists as the nature of the basis -dependent origination."

If cessation exists as its nature then cessation would be established for an arya's uncontaminated exalted wisdom analysing emptiness but this is not the case. Therefore, we must understand that cessation does not exist by way of its own nature. Arising does not exist as the reality of arising etc. So none of the things, such as cessation, arising

and so on, exist as the reality of dependent origination.

"Thus, the very non-existence of dependent origination as having such things as cessation as its nature is the nature of dependent origination."

Here, we need to understand that dependent origination does not have cessation as its nature. It does not have arising as its nature. It does not have production as its nature. This means the non-existence of dependent origination as having such things as cessation as its nature, IS its nature. This is its reality. This is its emptiness. So when we talk about the lack of true existence; lack of reality; lack of independent existence; lack of existence from the object's own side, this itself is the reality of the object.

"In the same way, when we examine whether or not the nature of dependent origination is its own nature, since this can be refuted by an analytic mind, we find that it does not exist as a nature."

The nature of dependent origination is emptiness. Then if one ask oneself, "Is the emptiness of dependent origination something that exists as its own nature?" The answer is no. Although emptiness is the way dependent arising exists, when one checks this emptiness to see whether it exists as its own nature one will see that this is not the case. This can be refuted by an analytic mind or what we call a rational consciousness. Here we have the example of a sprout:

"Although the absence of ultimate existence of the arising of the sprout is the very nature of the sprout, the absence of ultimate existence of arising is not the very nature of the absence of ultimate existence of arising because it is contradictory for anything to be its own nature."

The nature of the sprout is the absence of ultimate existence or the emptiness of ultimate existence but if one were to ask, "Is this

emptiness of ultimate existence the nature of the absence of ultimate existence?" Then the answer is no. So, although emptiness is the nature of the sprout, the emptiness is not the nature of the emptiness. Emptiness does not exist as its own nature. The text states the reason,

"It is contradictory for anything to be its own nature. And so, since it has been proven that the absence of ultimate existence of the arising of the sprout is the ultimate nature and the mode of existence of the sprout, how can the examination of whether such an essence ultimately exists by nature, be an examination of whether or not the sprout ultimately exists by nature?"

This is saying that we have to differentiate between checking for the ultimate existence of an object and checking whether or not this ultimate nature exists as its own nature. The text says, 'How can the examination of whether such an essence ultimately exists by nature be an examination of whether or not the sprout ultimately exist by nature?' This is saying that these two kinds of investigation are different. To check if the essence ultimately exists by nature is not the same as checking whether or not this sprout ultimately exists by nature. The text explains,

"However, this is an examination of whether the mode of existence of the sprout is to have the nature of its non-arising or whether it is just posited through the force of convention. In such an examination, whether that analytic mind finds its nature to exist or not as the nature of non-arising, should be understood as similar to the analysis of the sprout in every context."

We have to check the nature of the sprout. This is not the same as checking whether the nature of the sprout exists as the nature of the sprout. The last passage says that when we use the analytic mind (or the reasoning consciousness) to investigate its nature, to check whether it is in the nature of arising or non-arising etc, this is actually similar to the analysis mentioned above, where we analyse the sprout.

"In the context of the emptiness of emptiness, the emptiness of inherent existence and ultimate emptiness (or the emptiness of ultimate existence), taking the way things really are as an instance of a basis of emptiness, in order to show that ultimately it is empty of essence, is necessary for refuting the claim that the existence of reality and its absence of ultimate existence are contradictory."

In other words we are talking about the emptiness of emptiness. The basis itself is emptiness and we are talking about its emptiness of inherent existence or ultimate existence. It is necessary to show that emptiness is also empty so that we can refute the claim that the existence of reality and the absence of ultimate existence are contradictory.

"Therefore, some say, 'It is not tenable that the ultimate reality, the way that things really are and their nature, do not exist. But given that they exist and that they do not exist in themselves, in what other thing do they exist?' This is a question posed by those who do not understand the mode of analysis investigating the difference between ultimate existence and nonexistence."

We have to understand that although emptiness is the ultimate; it is reality; it is the way that things really are, emptiness does not exist as its own ultimate. Emptiness does not exist as its own reality. Emptiness does not exist, in its own way, as it really is. So there is no contradiction between these two presentations. Somebody who does not understand the distinction, then, has this type of doubt.

"Such fools make many false assertions to the effect that ultimate reality is not an object of knowledge and some others assert that it truly exists."

The two points made in this sentence are as explained earlier according to Lama Tsong Khapa's "Lekshay Nyingpo" ('Essence of

Eloquence'), in which he says that those people who do not understand this presentation properly think that emptiness is not an object of knowledge (is not an existent) because if emptiness were to exist from the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise realising emptiness, then it must truly exist but in this system true existence is refuted. Therefore, emptiness cannot exist. If it does exist it has to be truly existent and that is not possible. There are those who insist that since it appears to an arya's meditative equipoise this means that it truly exists. These are all misunderstandings of the presentation. The text continues, (p30)

"One might argue, 'If the existence of such things as cessation in dependent origination is not its mode of existence, these statements in sutra - saying that the eight (attributes), including arising, exist - do not make sense.'

This person is saying that although cessation, arising and so forth exist, they do not exist as their own modes of existence. How, then, can one make sense of the following sutra citations in which cessation, arising and annihilation are spoken about? Let us look at some of these citations:

"Through being conditioned by ignorance, action arises and through the cessation of ignorance action ceases."

The first part of this statement, 'through being conditioned by ignorance action arises' is talking about the first two links of the twelve links of dependent origination. We are talking about the forward order - that because of ignorance, action or compositional action or karma, arise. Here we are talking about arising which is one of the eight attributes in the 'Expression of Worship'.

The second part of this citation, 'Through the cessation of ignorance, action ceases' is talking about eradicating the arising of the twelve links of dependent origination. If ignorance ceases then compositional action or karma ceases. Here we are talking about cessation. The next

sutra citation says,

"Actions are impermanent;  
They are instances of arising and destruction.  
Having come into being they inevitably cease.  
Pacification of these is bliss."

Here, we are talking about karma or actions being impermanent. They have the properties of arising and disintegration. Having come into existence, they will definitely cease. Pacification of these is bliss. If we pacify these actions, the result is the pacification of contaminated aggregates that are appropriated through karma and afflictions. In this way we will attain happiness; we will attain bliss. In this citation there is mention of annihilation because we talk about the aggregates being pacified. That is annihilation. The next sutra citation:

"Whether or not the thatagatas arise, the nature of things is the same."

This talks about permanence. The nature of things is the same whether or not the Thatagatas arise. This indicates permanence which is another attribute in the 'Expression of Worship'. The next sutra citation states,

"The four foods are the single thing that sustains sentient beings."

Four kinds of foods are mentioned here. What are these foods? They are the foods of contact, consciousness, concentration and the food of the constituents. It is said that these four kinds of foods are the single thing that sustain sentient beings. This shows that there is oneness because the sutra citation says a "single thing". This identifies oneness, which again is mentioned in the 'Expression of Worship'. The next citation:

"Two things govern the world: shame and conscience."



This talks about shame and embarrassment. This shows that there is difference.

The next citation:

"From a previous life beings come here; from here they go on to the next."

This shows coming and going.

"'Prasannapada' replies to this by saying that these illustrations are presented according to two different perspectives, as per the previous quotation."

Chandrakirti's 'Clear Words' says that these examples, are presented according to two different perspectives because if we talk about the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise directly realising emptiness, then conventionalities do not exist. However, if the perspective is that of a conventional awareness then things such as arising and cessation do exist.

END OF DAY FOUR

## OCEAN OF REASONING - DAY 5

As said by the glorious Nagarjuna, "He, who caring with compassion, taught the holy dharma so that all wrong views be abandoned; to Gautama I prostrate". In this stanza of the homage to the Buddha Nagarjuna praises him for caring for sentient beings out of great compassion, teaching the holy dharma. We need to understand that since we don't want suffering, we need to overcome its cause, the principal of which is the view of transitory collection, the main form of ignorance. This view is the basis for all other afflictions.

Aryadeva in his 400 stanzas says that in order to overcome the

afflictions we need to overcome ignorance; this is because just as the body sense power pervades all the body, ignorance pervades all afflictions.

In this stanza by Nagarjuna he says that the Buddha taught the holy dharma so that all wrong views be abandoned. How? By the wisdom realizing selflessness. In particular, the Buddha taught subtle dependent arising – he revealed how dependent arising is the meaning of emptiness, and emptiness the meaning of dependent arising. Aryadeva continues to say: through realizing this, and familiarizing ourselves with that understanding, we will be able to eliminate ignorance, and by doing this, all afflictions will be abandoned. Therefore, we should definitely strive to realize what the Buddha has taught. For the sake of abandoning this ignorance that is the conception of self, we need to cultivate an understanding of emptiness and the wisdom that realizes emptiness. To that end, let us continue studying these topics in the text.

Yesterday we looked at an objection, where the opponent claims that since phenomena are not inherently existent, there is no karma etc. As a response, we say that even though phenomena are merely imputed by name, the presentation of objects, agent and action is feasible, and things are able to function.

Now we have the opinion of some past Tibetans, belonging to the Middle Way school, who deny arising and cessation as their own modes of existence. They are not able to posit conventional arising and cessation. Although they claim that they do not contradict sutra, these earlier Middle Way Tibetans have a misunderstanding, saying that there is no place for conventional phenomena that can be established by authoritative cognition or valid cognition. According to them, conventional phenomena are like a rope being grasped as a snake. Since they cannot properly establish conventionalities, they cannot refute nihilism either.

Here, there is a misunderstanding of what this system is positing. Some people think that the Middle Way refutes ultimate existence, and in that way, they also have to refute conventional existence. Due to this, they cannot posit cause and effect etc. In reality, in our system,

after refuting ultimate existence, we can posit conventional existence. Even though phenomena are merely nominally existent, they can still function.

As said by Nagarjuna in his 'Treatise to the Middle Way' – if emptiness is possible, then everything is possible; if emptiness is not possible, nothing is possible. Therefore, in this system, we can posit karma and its results. In fact, we can posit everything in samsara and nirvana. However, if one misunderstands the presentation in this system, one may think there is no possibility of positing conventional existence by way of valid cognition, and that conventional existence is just posited from an erroneous perspective.

In the phrase, “Having agreed to maintain the existence of conventional phenomena in this way”, “this way” refers to the erroneous way of positing phenomena according to past Tibetans - which we disagree with. Particularly, if conventional existence is posited in the above erroneous way, one cannot posit any objects seen by valid cognition; one cannot maintain any position and one cannot use reasoning to establish anything. To insist that phenomena exist truly is ridiculous and untenable.

Having refuted ultimate existence, one can posit conventional phenomena by means of valid cognition. Although ultimate phenomena, such as emptiness and the dharmakaya, do not exist ultimately, still one is able to posit them in a fully qualified manner. “Genuinely exist” in the English translation refers to existing in a fully qualified manner.

In our own system, we are able to refute true existence and posit conventional existence by way of valid cognition and nominal designation. However, scholars belonging to all the schools below the Autonomy school, posit true existence and maintain that phenomena must be truly existent. In fact, when one no longer maintains the position of true existence, then one no longer continues to argue about whether anything else exists.

Childish people are bound by the conception of extremes, and maintain that because things are dependent arisings, they must truly exist. They assert that cause and effect, actions, objects and agents

all truly exist. However, asserting dependent arising and asserting true existence are seen as contradictory by us. Here there is a higher chance of holding onto impermanent phenomena, rather than un-compounded phenomena, as truly existent. This is because impermanent phenomena are able to harm or benefit us in daily life, whereas un-compounded phenomena – being permanent – are not able to do this. Since there is a higher probability of mistakenly maintaining the true existence of compounded phenomena, the text concentrates on refuting the inherent existence of compounded phenomena, and as an ancillary, refutes the inherent existence of un-compounded phenomena.

Bottom of page 31

"..... impermanent phenomena or compounded phenomena when it says,  
If no produced things exist, how could the unproduced exist?"

This is saying that if compounded phenomena do not exist inherently then how could un-compounded phenomena exist inherently?

"In the sutras, assertions of both the existence and nonexistence of such things as arising and cessation are found."

We can find in the sutras assertions of the existence of arising and cessation. However, we can also find statements saying that arising and cessation do not exist. So how does one reconcile these seeming contradictions? The text says,

"Therefore, in order to dispel doubts with regard to what is definitive and what requires interpretation and to avoid the misconception of taking the interpretable meaning to be definitive, this treatise is written, distinguishing interpretable from definitive meanings. These two concepts have been explained in great detail in the 'Essence of Eloquence': The Two Charioteers' Distinction Between Interpretable and Definitive Meanings. So I refer the reader to that text."

Because of the various statements that we find in the sutras, they sometimes say that arising exists and sometimes that arising does not exist. Thus, we need to be able to distinguish which are definitive-meaning presentations and which are interpretable-meaning presentations. There are certain passages which need to be interpreted because there is an underlying intention. It has to be interpreted to be something other than what is stated explicitly. In order to make such a differentiation, in order to avoid the misconception of taking the interpretable meaning to be the definitive meaning, this treatise has been written. Also these concepts have been explained in great detail in Lama Tsong Khapa's 'Essence of Eloquence.'

The end of the above quotation mentions "The Essence of Eloquence: The Two Charioteers' Distinction Between Interpretable and Definitive Meanings." The two charioteers are none other than Asanga and Nagarjuna. Asanga is the charioteer of the Mind-Only system. Following the sutra, "Unravelling the Thought", he formulated the distinction between the interpretable and the definitive meaning.

The other charioteer is Nagarjuna of the Middle Way system, the Madhyamika. Following the Aksayamati sutra, Nagarjuna gives his interpretation of the distinction between the definitive and interpretable meaning. These various positions have been explained in detail by Lama Tsong Khapa in his text, "The Essence of Eloquence" ("Yeshe Nyingpo"). That brings us to the next section. (p32)

### **Refuting the argument regarding the number of attributes and the order in which they are presented.**

"Suppose someone argued as follows: if the demonstration negating the eight attributes, for instance cessation, applies to all objects of refutation, then the list is too brief. But if it is a mere instance, then the two lines of the homage 'Without cessation, without arising, without annihilation, without permanence' would be sufficient and so the remainder of the homage would be otiose."

This refers to the "Expression of Worship" (p24-p25) where the eight attributes are mentioned: cessation, arising, annihilation, permanence, coming, going, difference and oneness.

This person is saying that eight attributes is either too few or too many. Why just these eight? If one is negating these attributes, it actually applies to all objects of refutation, in which case the list is too brief. It should be more. But if it is just a mere instance, just a mere portion, then why does one have to list all eight? One could, for example, use just two lines, saying, "without cessation, without arising, without annihilation, without permanence", in which case, eight is too many. In response to the argument that these eight attributes are too few or too many, our own system says,

"It is neither. Why is that? Although there are endless attributes of dependent origination, the eight are presented because just these are the primary bones of contention, since reificationists argue that things have essence principally on the ground of these attributes. The bone of contention is whether or not the essence of such things as cessation exist, and can be understood through the context in which this debate occurs..."

We are saying that we do not incur the fault of mentioning too few or too many attributes because even though there are endless attributes of dependent origination, these are the primary branches of the dispute. The proponents of true existence view that these functioning things have inherent existence. For that reason we are using these eight attributes. Those are sufficient; they are neither too few nor too many. The text continues,

"The bone of contention is whether or not the essence of such things (the inherent existence of such things) as cessation exists and can be understood through the context in which this debate occurs and also from Buddhapalita's explanation. Those who maintain that Parahita says that the debate is a disagreement regarding the meaning of

'arising' and 'cessation', miss the context."

These proponents of true existence maintain that arising, cessation and so forth exist inherently. This is why we are singling out these features, these attributes from the 'Expression of Worship'. The text continues,

"With respect to the development and degeneration of things, arising and cessation are demonstrated; with respect to time, permanence and impermanence; with respect to destination, coming and going; with respect to relata, identity and difference are demonstrated."

This passage explains why these eight attributes are discussed in the 'Expression of Worship'. There are four points of view. First, with respect to entity, we talk about arising and cessation. Second, with respect to time, we talk about permanence and impermanence. Third, with respect to place, we talk about coming and going. Fourth, with respect to comparisons we talk about oneness and difference.

The part that we have just discussed explains the definiteness in number. The eight attributes mentioned in the 'Expression of Worship' are neither too few nor too many; they are definite in number. With that, we move on to the next argument regarding the order in which they are presented. (The last paragraph on page 32)

"Suppose someone were to object that when there is arising there is cessation and that without the former the latter does not occur. So it would make more sense to say, "without arising and without ceasing."

If you notice in the 'Expression of Worship', it talks about cessation first, followed by arising. It says, 'That which is dependent origination is without cessation, without arising.' Then there is an objection : you should say 'arising' first, not 'cessation' because without arising there is no cessation. So, you should say, 'without arising' then, 'without cessation.' Thus, the argument here is about the sequence. The text continues,

"There is order: Choejin's birth is at the beginning and his death is at the end of his life. However, the order is reversed in order to demonstrate that if they existed by virtue of their own characteristics, the order would be irrelevant. For if they existed by virtue of their own characteristics, they would have to be either one or different. And if the birth in the beginning and the death at the end were essentially different, Choejin would not die after he were born, or would not be born before he were dead."

Here, we are talking about inherent existence. If things were to exist inherently; if arising and cessation were to exist inherently; if they were to exist by way of their own character, then the order would be indefinite. It is immaterial whether arising occurs before cessation because these things exist by way of their own characteristics. Therefore, one could have a death first and a birth last. It does not make any difference because they exist inherently. At the bottom of page 32 our system is saying, 'The order is reversed in order to demonstrate that if they existed by virtue of their own characteristics, the order would be irrelevant.'

We are saying 'cessation first' intentionally, followed by 'without arising' because here, we are trying to refute inherent existence. We are trying to refute existence by way of its own characteristics. Thus, in that context, the order is not relevant. Here, we are applying the reasoning employed by Kamalashila called 'the proof of freedom from one or many.'

The last sentence on page 32 says, 'For if they existed by virtue of their own characteristics, they would have to be either one or different.'

If these two, arising and cessation, or birth and death, were to exist by way of their own character, they would have to be either truly one or truly different. This is the reasoning that we are going to analyse. With regard to the first possibility, the text says, (p33)

"If the birth in the beginning and the death at the end were



essentially different, Choejin would not die after he were born, or would not be born before he were dead."

In this circumstance, we are asking, "What if birth and death were inherently different?" If they were inherently different they would be completely independent of each other. They would be unrelated to each other because of being inherently different. In such a case, birth and death would be unrelated because they would exist by way of their own character. The consequence would be that Choejin would not die after he were born or would not be born before he were dead. These two features, arising and cessation, or birth and death, are completely unrelated. Therefore, they do not have to occur in relation to each other. He would not die after he were born; he would not be born before he were dead. This is the absurd consequence if they were inherently different.

Let's consider the second possibility: if they were inherently one or if they were essentially identical, the very person who was born would die and if that were the case then that very person who died would be born. Therefore, the fallacy would arise that when a god dies, that very one would necessarily be born as a god.

In this second possibility, we are considering birth and death being inherently one. This means they would be indivisibly one. They would be inseparably one, meaning that they would be exactly the same. This means that the person who was born would die because birth and death are essentially the same. If that were the case, the person who died would be born because death and birth are the same. When a god died, the god would be reborn as a god.

With this we have completed one of the major outlines, the general meaning. Now we are going to look at the meaning of the branches.

### **Supporting Point**

The text continues,  
"'Prostrate' means venerate."

Prostrate appears in the 'Expression of Worship', p24. 'I prostrate to the perfect Buddha.'

Prostrate there means venerate.

“To whom? To the completely enlightened one who elucidated dependent origination. How is it elucidated? It is explained that since dependent origination is not essentially arisen, it is shown, in accordance with the nature of the object of the uncontaminated wisdom of meditated equipoise, to lack the following: (- the eight attributes.)

The Buddha explained dependent origination. How did he explain it? By saying that since dependent origination is not inherently existent, it is shown in accordance with the nature of the object of the uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise. In other words, it is shown in accordance with the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise directly realising emptiness.

Recall that we have explained this several times: if conventional phenomena were to exist from the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise, they would be truly existent. In reality, conventional phenomena do not appear in the perspective of an arya's meditative equipoise. Therefore, the attributes such as cessation, arising and so forth are not the objects of the uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise. Here, it is said that the features are shown in accordance with the nature of the object of the uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise, to lack the following:

cessation - which means, ceasing every moment, or disintegration or transformation in every instant.

Second, arising - which means to become the thing that it is.

Third, annihilation - this refers to the extinction of the previous continuum.

Fourth, permanence - which is persistence through time or perpetual abidance.

Fifth, coming - referring to coming nearer from a distant place.

Sixth, going - which refers to going afar from nearby.

Seventh, distinction - refers to difference between objects. For example, the difference between a pot and a pillar.

Finally, oneness - referring to lack of difference between objects.

The text continues,

"Since, from the perspective of the exalted ones who see the way dependent origination really exists, in accordance with reality, all the fabrications of the expressed and the expression, definition and definiendum etc., cease, the reality of dependent origination is called 'free from fabrication.'"

This passage explains the line in the 'Expression of Worship', 'being free from fabrication,' or 'being free from elaborations.' Why is the reality of dependent origination called 'free from elaborations?' This is because, from the perspective of the aryas in meditative equipoise, dependent origination exists in the way it appears. In that situation, all elaborations are completely pacified. Accordingly, there are no fabrications of the expressed and expression, definition and definiendum and so on because all dualistic appearances have completely vanished. There is no appearance of the object of negation. There is no appearance of conventionality and so forth. The text continues, (p33 halfway)

"In such a state, free from the engagement of either mind or mental processes - (mental factors) - absent of the movement of conceptual thought, having recused oneself from the conventions of knower and known etc., one is free from the torment of birth, ageing, sickness, death etc and so it is peaceful."

This passage is clarifying the word 'peaceful' in the last line of the 'Expression of Worship'. The state is peaceful. What does that mean? This has two levels of meaning: one at the time of the cause; one at the time of the result. At the time of the cause, it says that the state is free from mind and mental factors. It is free from the movement of conceptual thought, having eliminated the conventions of knower, the

object to be known and so forth. Here, at the time of the cause of a non-conceptual exalted wisdom of an arya's meditated equipoise, one is free from minds; one is free from mental factors; one is free from all kinds of movement of conceptual thought. One does not have the conventions of knower and known and so on. At the time of the result, one is free from birth, ageing, sickness, death etc. 'Peaceful,' then, has two meanings: peaceful at the time of the cause and peaceful at the time of the result.

"Because he understands the reality of dependent origination, the Victor alone, is regarded by Nagarjuna as speaking the non-erroneous truth. Regarding all others as chattering children, Nagarjuna, once again, with deep reverence, addresses the Buddha as 'the supreme teacher,' distinguishing him from all others. Who did this? The master Nagarjuna!"

We are trying to understand why, in the 'Expression of Worship', Nagarjuna refers to the Buddha as 'the supreme teacher'. This is because Nagarjuna regarded the Buddha alone, as someone who spoke the non-erroneous truth, in that he was able to understand exactly the reality of dependent origination. Thus, he teaches in a peerless manner. All others are like chattering children, childish people babbling away. For that reason Nagarjuna refers to the Buddha as the supreme teacher and distinguishes him from other teachers.

When this passage talks about the Buddha, it says, 'the Victor alone is regarded by Nagarjuna as speaking the non-erroneous truth.' Here, there is the connotation of the Buddha having the unique quality of being able to directly perceive emptiness and dependent arising in a single consciousness, without alternation.

At the time of a learner, one is not able to do this. When one is directly realising emptiness one is not able to directly realise dependent arising. Then there is this alternation. With the Buddha, however, there is no alternation between meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment. With a single mind, he is able to directly realise both emptiness and dependent origination.

The text asks, "When" did Nagarjuna praise the Buddha? "At the beginning of the treatise! The purpose is to demonstrate his authenticity and to cultivate others' reverence for the Buddha."

There is a twofold purpose here. The first is to demonstrate that he (Nagarjuna) is an excellent being, able to cause others to generate faith and confidence in the Buddha. What does it mean for Nagarjuna to demonstrate that he is an excellent being? It is said that all excellent beings, at the time of initiating an important project would pay homage. So Nagarjuna is expressing his concordance with such behaviour.

The second purpose is to cause others to generate the faith of conviction or, lucid faith, in the Buddha.

"There are many ways to praise the Buddha. However, the reason why he is profusely praised in this text and in others for teaching dependent origination is, as explained ....."

Here, the Buddha is praised for his teaching dependent origination. Indeed, there are many ways in which one can praise the Buddha. For example, one can praise the Buddha for his realisations. One can praise the Buddha from the point of view of his abandonments. One can praise the Buddha's wisdom, compassion, his power and so on. Here, the Buddha is not praised in those ways; he is praised for his teaching dependent origination.

The reason why he is profusely praised in this text for teaching dependent origination is explained in the homage verse of 'Yuktisastika.' (Nagarjuna's Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning).

"This great person was attracted to the Buddha by his mode of negating arising and cessation etc., just by virtue of the fact that they are dependently originated. This is the principal mode of argument he presents. (p34 top)

As we see in Nagarjuna's 'Expression of Worship' and in his 'Sixty

Stanzas of Reasoning,' also in his text 'Refutation of Objections' and other texts, the Buddha is praised for teaching dependent origination. Nagarjuna is also attracted to the Buddha for his way of negating all extremes, arising, ceasing etc. based on the reason that they are dependent arisings. This is the primary reasoning he presents here.

We have just completed the section called 'The Meaning of the Branches.' The next section 2.2 on page 34 is called, 'How to interpret dependent origination free from the eight extremes.'

Since this is a long section and we will not be able to complete it today we shall stop here.



