

PERFECTION OF WISDOM

(CHAPTER IX)

BODHICARYAVATARA

A Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life



Bodhisattva Shantideva

Translated by Ven. Geshe Dorji Damdul



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TIBET HOUSE

Cultural Centre of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

PERFECTION OF WISDOM
(CHAPTER NINE)

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A GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE

BODHISATTVA SHANTIDEVA



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*For the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama
and the swift fulfillment of his wishes.*



PERFECTION OF WISDOM CHAPTER
BODHICARYAVATARA
A GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE

BODHISATVA SHANTIDEVA

THE NEED TO GENERATE THE WISDOM REALISING ULTIMATE
REALITY

- (1) The Sage propounded all these branches [of teachings]
For the sake of [promoting] wisdom.
Therefore, those who wish to pacify suffering
Should generate wisdom.

ASCERTAINING THE TWO TRUTHS

- (2) Conventional and Ultimate,
These are accepted as being the two truths.
The Ultimate is not the object of [dualistic] mind;
The [dualistic] mind is spoken of [in relation to] the Conventional
[truth].
- (3) In light of that, the world is seen to be of two types:
Yogis and common people.
And regarding that, the world of common people
Is undermined by the world of the yogis.
- (4) Through differences in their intelligence, [the views of]
Yogis too are undermined by progressively higher ones
By means of examples accepted by both, and because
Unanalysed [both engage in practices] for the sake of the result.

REFUTING OBJECTIONS FROM THE PROPONENTS OF INHERENT
EXISTENCE

- (5) The [common] world sees functional things
And conceives them to be truly existent;
Not like an illusion. In this regard
There is dispute between the yogis and the [common] world.

REFUTING THE REALISTS IN GENERAL

(A) BY REFUTING CONTRADICTION WITH DIRECT PERCEPTION

- (6) But even form and so on [which are perceived by] direct perception
Are but a convention that is not [perceived] by valid cognition
[which views the ultimate];
[Form and so on] are false, like worldly acceptance of that
What is unclean and so forth as clean and so forth.

(B) BY REFUTING CONTRADICTION WITH BUDDHA'S WORDS

- (7) For the sake of letting the [common] world enter [into reality],
The Guardian [Buddha] taught [about truly existent] functional things.
In the ultimate sense, however, they are not “momentary.”
[Suppose, like the Sautrantikas (known as Followers of Sutra)] you
object,
“But that is also contradictory on the conventional [level].”

- (8) The [valid] convention of Yogis [has] no fault [of contradiction].
Otherwise, [their] assertion of the uncleanness
Of a woman's [body, for instance]
Would be undermined by the [common] world.

- (9) [Furthermore] from the illusion-like Victorious Ones,
[arise] positive force,
In the same way as if they [actually] were [truly existent]
functional things.
Suppose you object, “But, if a sentient being were like an illusion,
Then how could he take rebirth, once having died?”

- (10) [Well] so long as conditions are gathered together,
The illusion lasts that long as well.
And how could a sentient being be truly existent
Merely because his continuum lasts longer?

- (11) In murdering, an illusory person and so on,
 There is no negative force, since it has no mind.
 But with someone having an illusion[-like] mind,
 Positive and negative forces accrue.
- (12) Because mantras and so forth lack the ability,
 [They] cannot produce a mind in an illusion.
 Even illusory ones that arise from varying conditions
 are of varying kinds,
 [Since] nowhere is there one condition with the ability
 to [produce] all [things].
- (13) [Suppose you ask]
 “If ultimately someone is released in [natural] nirvana
 And conventionally is circling in samsara;
 Then Buddha as well would be circling in samsara, and
 What use would there be for bodhisattva conduct?”
- (14) [Well] even an illusion cannot be turned back
 Unless the continuity of its [causal] conditions has ceased.
 Yet, when the continuity of those conditions ceases,
 It does not arise even on the conventional [level].

REFUTING THE OBJECTIONS OF THE CHITTAMATRINS
 [PROPONENTS OF MIND ONLY SCHOOL]

- (15) [Suppose, like the Chittamatrin (Mind Only School) you then ask]
 “When even the deceptive awareness [of it] doesn't [truly] exist,
 By what is the illusion apprehended?”
 [Well] since according to you, the illusion itself does not [externally]
 exist,
 Then what is being apprehended?

- (16) [Suppose you answer],
“In actuality, it exists as something else:
The aspect of which is the very mind itself.”
[Well] when mind itself is like an illusion,
Then what is being seen by what?
- (17) The Guardian of the World, in fact, said
“Mind cannot see mind.”
Just as the edge of a sword cannot cut itself,
So [it is with] the mind.
- (18) [Suppose you respond]
“But, it is just like the way a candle flame
Perfectly illuminates its own characteristics.”
[Well] the flame of a candle is not being illuminated [by itself],
Since darkness does not obscure [darkness].
- (19) [Suppose you reply],
“There is blue in a crystal [resting on blue] and
an intrinsic blue [as in lapis lazuli]
Which does not depend on something else [for its colour].
So like this, [we] see some [things] that depend on something else
And some that do not.”
- (20) The intrinsic blue is not [tenable],
There isn't anything that makes itself blue;
- (21) If [you] say that “the mind cognizes
The illumination of the candle flame,”
[Well] based upon whose cognition can the statement be made,
“A mind has an illuminating nature”?

- (22) Since it has never been seen by anyone,
 Discussing whether it is [self]-luminous
 Or not, is meaningless;
 Like the attractiveness of a barren woman's daughter.
- (23) [Suppose you insist]
 "But if a self-cognizing mind does not exist,
 Then how can a consciousness be recalled?"
 [Well] a recollection comes about from a connection
 With another [object] that was experienced, like [recalling] the poison
 from a rat [bite].
- (24) [And suppose you persist]
 "But it can illuminate itself because,
 When endowed with other conditions, [one can] see [others' minds]."
 [Well] by means of applying magic eye lotion,
 A [buried treasure] vase is seen while the eye lotion itself [is not seen].
- (25) Those which are seen, heard, or known
 Are not to be negated.
 Here, [instead] the conception of true existence, which is
 the cause of suffering,
 Is to be rejected.
- (26) [Suppose you say]
 "The illusion [of an external object] is not separate from the mind;
 Despite being inseparable, it is still impermanent."
 [Well] if it were a [truly existent] functional thing, how could it not be
 different [from the mind]?
 And if [you say] it is not different, it could not be a [truly existent]
 functional thing.

- (27) Although the illusion is not truly existent, it is still an object of view,
So it is for the viewer.
Suppose [you still object] “But samsara must have [some truly existent]
functional thing as its support;
Otherwise, it would be like space.”
- (28) [Well] how could a non-thing, supported by a truly existent thing,
Come to have a function [of giving rise to bondage and liberation]?
The mind you [asserted] would be [reduced, in fact]
To something existing alone by itself, accompanied by nothing.
- (29) And if the mind is free of [an object of] apprehension,
Then everyone would be a One Thus Gone [Buddha].
And if that were the case, what benefit would there be
In conceiving of mind-only?

REFUTING THE ASSERTION THAT THE PATH WHICH UNDERSTANDS EMPTINESS IS OF NO BENEFIT

- (30) [Suppose you ask]
“Even upon knowing the illusion-like [nature of things],
How do disturbing emotions subside?
Since lust for an illusory woman
Can arise even in the one who conjured her up?”
- (31) [Well, that happens because] heretofore the conjurer has not rid himself
Of dispositions of disturbing emotions towards knowable things,
And so when he sees her,
His inclination towards emptiness is still weak.
- (32) However, by habituating himself with the imprint of
understanding emptiness,
He will rid himself of the inclination to see things [as truly existent].
Then, by habituating himself with the “emptiness” of all [phenomena
including even emptiness],
Later, he will be rid of even the idea [of the true existence of emptiness].

- (33) Through not finding the object of investigation,
The non-existence of that thing is claimed.
Then lacking a basis,
How can the emptiness of a thing stand in front of the mind?
- (34) When neither a [truly existent] functional thing,
Nor the emptiness of the functional thing stands before the mind,
[Then] having no other [object of] apprehension,
There is full pacification in [a state] without mental apprehension.
- (35) [Then] just as a wish-fulfilling gem
And a wish-granting tree fulfill all wishes;
Likewise, through the power of prayers,
The enlightened body of a Victor appears to the disciples.
- (36) For example, when a garudika healer,
Who empowered a healing cairn, has passed away,
[That cairn] can pacify poison and the like
Long after [the healer's] death.
- (37) Similarly, when a bodhisattva has passed into nirvana,
After setting up the reliquary [body] of a Victor
In accord with bodhisattva's conduct,
He still performs all [the necessary] deeds.
- (38) [Suppose you ask]
“How can offerings made to something lacking a mind give rise to results?”
[Well] because whether he is alive
Or has already passed into nirvana,
[Making offerings] has been proclaimed [to generate] the same [amount of merit].

- (39) According to scriptural authority, results [accrue] —
Whether on the conventional or ultimate level —
Similar to the way [you say that offerings made]
To a truly existent Buddha give results.

ESTABLISHING THAT THE WISDOM OF EMPTINESS IS ULTIMATELY THE TRUE PATH TO LIBERATION

- (40) [Suppose, like the Hinayanist tenet holders, you then object]
“But, since liberation occurs through seeing the [four noble] truths,
What is the use of seeing Emptiness?”
[Well] why? Because in scriptures it is proclaimed
That without this path, there is no Enlightenment.
- (41) Suppose [you then object]
“But, Mahayana is not established [as valid]!”
[Well] how can [your] scriptures be established?
[If you answer] “Because they¹ are established for both parties.”
[Well, you should accept that] they were not established for you from the
start.
- (42) Any criterion that would give confidence in them
Would equally [apply] to the Mahayana [scriptures] too.
And if acceptance by two different parties could make something true,
Then the Vedas and so on also would become true.
- (43) Suppose [you argue],
“But it is because the Mahayana [scriptures that] are disputed.”
[Well] because [your] scriptures are disputed by non-Buddhists
And some other [sections within your] scriptures [are disputed] by
yourselves and others,
They would have to be discarded [too].

- (44) Although, the [Arhat] Bhikshus are the foundation
of the [Buddha's] teachings,
It is hard [for you to posit the existence] of [Arhat] Bhikshus
[Because] it is difficult for those endowed with minds apprehending
[True existence to posit the feasibility of] Nirvana.
- (45) [Suppose you reply]
“But they are liberated, because they rid themselves of disturbing
emotions.”
[Well] that [liberation] must occur immediately upon [overcoming just
the manifest afflictions];
However, despite [their] lacking [gross] disturbing emotions,
They have the karmic potential [to propel them to another samsaric
birth].
- (46) Suppose [you then say],
“But it is definite that they do not have
Craving [as a condition] for obtaining [rebirth].”
Even if this craving is not [entirely a gross] disturbing emotion
Why does it not exist [on two levels, grosser and subtler] like the
ignorance does.
- (47) Through the force of feeling, there is craving,
And feeling exists in those [purported Arhats] as well.
So a mind having [true existence] as its object
Is what some [people] are endowed with.
- (48) A mind that is parted from [the experience of] emptiness.
May block [disturbing emotion], but they will arise once again,
Like [conceptual discriminations arising after] the meditative equipoise
of non-discrimination
Therefore, [one needs to] meditate on emptiness.

- (49) [So again] if you accept as spoken by the Buddha
Any speech that has been included in the sutras,
Then why not accept the Mahayana [sutras] which, for the most part,
Are equivalent to [your] sutras?
- (50) If because of one exception,
All would become corrupt;
Then why, because of one equivalence to [your] sutras,
Would not all have been spoken by the Buddha?
- (51) And who would consider unacceptable
Some speech, the depths of which
[Even] Maha-Kasyapa and the like could not fathom,
[Simply] because you cannot understand it?
- (52) [After all] the fruit of [realizing] emptiness is this:
Through freedom from the extremes of attachment and fear,
One is able to remain in samsara
For the sake of those who suffer due to ignorance,
- (53) As this is the case, disputation
Against emptiness is improper.
Therefore, without indecision,
Please meditate on emptiness.
- (54) Emptiness is the remedy to the darkness
Of afflictive and cognitive obscurations;
[So] how can someone wishing to achieve omniscience quickly
Not meditate on it?
- (55) Since [grasping at the true existence of] things gives rise to the suffering
Which we fear,
While [realizing] emptiness pacifies that suffering,
Why be fearful about that [wisdom realizing emptiness]?

REASONS THAT ESTABLISH THE VIEW OF EMPTINESS

(A) ESTABLISHING THE "SELFLESSNESS OF PERSONS"

- (56) If there were something called a "self",
There would be something to be afraid.
But as one finds "self" nowhere,
Who is there to experience fear?
- (57) Teeth, hair, and nails are not a "self".
Nor is "self" the bones or blood.
["Self" is] neither mucous nor phlegm.
Nor is "self" lymph or pus.
- (58) "Self" is not fat nor sweat.
Neither is "self" the lungs nor liver.
"Self" is not any of the other visceral organs.
Neither is "self" faeces nor urine.
- (59) Flesh and skin are not a "self";
Nor is "self" heat or wind.
In no way is "self" one of the bodily orifices,
Nor are [any of] the six types of consciousness a "self."
- (1) REFUTATION OF THE "SELF" AS POSTULATED
BY THE NON-BUDDHISTS TENET HOLDERS
- A) REFUTATION OF SAMKYA SCHOOL'S POSITION OF "SELF"
- (60) And if the mind [perceiving] sound were permanent
[as Samkhyas assert],
The sound would be cognized at all times.
But what is cognized when bereft of an object to be cognized?
By what means could it be called a cognizer?
- (61) If [something] could be a cognizer without an object of cognition,
Then absurdly a stick would also be a cognizer.
Therefore, without being associated with an object of cognition,
It is certain that cognition is non-existent.

- (62) Suppose [you say],
“It cognizes a ‘sight.’”
[Well] why doesn’t it also hear at that time?
If [you answer], “Because the sound is not nearby,”
[Well] then it is no longer a cognizer of it.
- (63) How can something having the nature of being a cognizer of sound
Become the cognizer of sight?
[By virtue of] imputation a single person is a ‘father’ and a ‘son’
And not [due to] his ‘absolute nature.’
- (64) Likewise [the state of equilibrium of] courage [sattva, pleasure],
particles [rajas, pain], and darkness [tamas, neutral sensation]
[as the absolute nature],
Is neither a ‘son’ nor a ‘father’;
And [a cognizer of a sight] has never been seen
That has a fundamental nature connected with a cognizer of a sound.
- (65) [Suppose you persist]
“Like a dancer, it is still itself, but is seen in another guise.”
[Well then] it would be impermanent.
And suppose [you clarify], the other guise is the very same [entity],
[Well then] its oneness [in fundamental nature] is a
oneness that did not exist before.
- (66) Suppose [you explain],
“But its other modes [of perception] are not true.”
Then please describe its own [innate] nature.
Suppose [you answer], “It is a cognizer.”
[Well then], absurdly it would follow that all persons are one.
- (67) [Further] what has mind and what lacks mind –
those two would, in fact, become the same thing
Because their existence would be the same.
And if their individual identities were false,
Then what could be their shared basis?

B) REFUTATION OF NAIYAYIKA SCHOOL'S POSITION OF "SELF"

- (68) Furthermore, something lacking mind cannot be a self
[as Nyaya-Vaisheshikas assert],
Because it has no mind, like a vase and such things.
Now [suppose you claim], "It is cognizant because of its
conjunction with a mind."
Then it absurdly follows that [this] non-cognizant [self] has perished.
- (69) And if the self were [in fact] unchanging,
What could a mind do to it?
If [the self] were devoid of mind and activities,
Space could also become a self.

(2) REJECTION OF ARGUMENTS CONCERNING
"SELFLESSNESS OF PERSON"

- (70) Suppose you [then] object,
"But, if a [permanent] self does not truly exist,
The connection between actions and their effects
could not be maintained.
Since, actions cease after having been done,
To whom should the action be ascribed?"
- (71) [Well] since it is established for both of us
That action and result have a different basis,
And that the self has no active role in this,
Is it not useless to debate on this [point]?
- (72) Seeing a causal state endowed [with a simultaneous] result
Is never feasible.
Through the shared continuum,
The agent and the experiencer [of results] are explained.
- (73) The past and the future minds
Are not the self, since they do not exist [presently].
And, if the mind [presently] arising were the self,
When it perishes, there would, in fact, be no self!

- (74) For example, when the trunk of a plantain tree
Is split apart, nothing [is found].
Likewise, when sought through investigation,
A self also cannot be [found as] an absolute thing.
- (75) [Suppose] you ask,
“If sentient beings do not exist,
Towards whom could one generate compassion?”
[Well, the objects of compassion are] those [beings], accepted
[as existing, for whom we cultivate the desire to achieve]
the resultant state [of enlightenment]
And who are imputed by ignorance.
- (76) [Suppose you then ask]
“Who owns the fruit, if there are no sentient beings?”
[Well] fair enough. But this is accepted [on the level
of imputation] by ignorance
[For the sake of] the result, in order to completely pacify
suffering, do not abandon [those aspects of the path
which have an element of] ignorance.

(B) SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA

(1) IN RELATION TO CLOSE PLACEMENT OF MINDFULNESS ON
THE BODY

- (77) Because arrogance misconceives the [nature of] self,
Suffering increases.
[Suppose] you say, “But, that cannot be undermined.”
[Well, then] it is best to meditate on selflessness.
- (78) A body is neither the feet nor the calves.
Nor is a body, the thighs or the hips.
Neither the belly nor the back is the body.
Nor is a body the chest or the arms.

- (79) The sides of the torso and the hands are not a body.
Nor is a body the armpits or the shoulders.
The visceral organs also are not it.
And neither is a body the head nor the neck.
So what then is a body?
- (80) If this body were located
With a portion in all of these [parts];
Then, although the parts are located in [its own] parts,
Where are [the parts] in turn located?
- (81) And if a body itself, in its entirety,
Were located [everywhere], in the hands and so forth,
There would be as many bodies
As there were hands and so on.
- (82) As the body does not exist [either] outside or inside [the parts],
How could the hands and so forth possess a body?
As it does not exist separately from the hands and so on,
How could it possibly be [truly] existent?
- (83) Thus, a body is not [truly] existent.
But because of ignorance,
The mind perceiving a self in hands, and so forth, arises.
Like the mind perceiving a man in an effigy,
Because the [effigy] is moulded in the shape [of a man].
- (84) For as long as the conditions are assembled,
The body [of the effigy] is seen as a man.
Likewise, for as long as there are hands and so on,
They are seen as the body.

- (85) Similarly, because of its being a composite of fingers,
Where is the hand?
[The same analysis can be applied to] that [finger], because
of its being a composite of joints;
And to a joint as well, with the breakdown into its own parts;
- (86) And to a part, as well, through breaking it down into particles;
And to that particle as well, because of directional divisions;
And to the directional parts also, because of lacking [intrinsic] parts,
Like space, the particles do not [truly] exist.
- (87) Therefore, what wise [person] would be attached
To a bodily form that is like a dream?
And since a body does not [truly] exist that way,
Then what is a male and what is a female?

(2) “SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA” IN RELATION TO
CLOSE PLACEMENT OF MINDFULNESS ON FEELING

- (88) If suffering was absolute by nature,
Why does it not undermine [our experience of] extreme joy?
And if happiness [existed intrinsically],
Why does a good taste and so forth not delight someone
tormented by grief and the like.
- (89) Suppose [you answer],
“It is not experienced, because it is overridden
By something more intense.”
[Well] how can something not in the nature of an experience
Still be [categorized as] a feeling?
- (90) Suppose [you reply]
“Could it not still be suffering in a subtle state,
After its gross [level] has been displaced?”
[Well, then] you could [also] say that, other than that
[extreme joy], it was a slight [level of] joy,
And then, [absurdly] its subtle state would be one of that [joy] too.

- (91) Suppose [you say],
“But with the arising of discordant conditions,
There is no arising of suffering.”
[Well] is it not established that
A feeling is [merely] something imputed by a conceptual thought?
- (92) Because of that, [one] should
Meditate on this analytical remedy.
The concentrative mind that grows from the field of examination
Is the food of yogis.
- (93) If there is a gap between a sense power and its object,
Where would they meet?
And if there is no gap, they would be fused as one,
So the meeting would be of what with what?
- (94) Yet, there cannot be penetration of a particle by a particle:
They have no empty space and they are of uniform [size].
When there is no penetration, there is no co-mingling;
And when there is no co-mingling, there is no meeting.
- (95) Moreover, for something that is partless,
How could what might be called “a meeting” properly take place?
If a meeting and being partless can be observed [together],
Then show it, please!
- (96) For a consciousness, which is immaterial,
A meeting is untenable;
A collection as well does not truly exist.
The analysis [of the collection of words] undertaken
previously is also applicable here.
- (97) And so, like that, when contact does not truly exist,
From what does a feeling arise?
For what reason, [then] is all this painful effort made?
For whom and from what can harm occur?

- (98) And when no [truly existent] one feels,
And feeling, as well, does not [truly] exist,
Then seeing this situation,
Why is craving not eliminated?
- (99) Nevertheless, [some things] can be seen and also can be touched
Through what has the nature of a dream or an illusion.
[Furthermore] a feeling, because it has arisen simultaneously
with the mind,
Is not perceived by that [mind].
- (100) [Those] produced before or after [the feeling]
Can remember and not experience [that feeling].
[In short, a feeling] cannot experience itself,
And it cannot be experienced by something else either.
- (101) As there is no [truly existent] one that feels,
Then feeling cannot truly exist.
How can it induce harm
To this collection [of aggregates] that lacks a true self?
- (3) “SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA” IN RELATION TO
CLOSE PLACEMENT OF MINDFULNESS ON MIND
- (102) A mind does not exist in sense powers, in forms and so on,
Nor in the space in between.
A mind is not inside, nor outside,
Nor can it be found anywhere else.
- (103) Something that is not the body nor something else,
Neither co-mingled, nor separate in any way,
Is not a [truly existent] thing at all. Because of that,
Sentient beings are released in natural nirvana.

- (104) If the cognition [of something] exists prior to the object of cognition,
Then on what does it focus to arise?
And if a cognition and the object of cognition are simultaneous,
[Still] on what does it focus to arise?
- (105) Yet, if it occurs after the object of cognition,
Then from what does the cognition [of it] arise?

- (4) “SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA” IN RELATION TO
CLOSE PLACEMENT OF MINDFULNESS OF PHENOMENA
A [truly existent] arising of any phenomenon
Cannot be determined.

REJECTING THE OBJECTION THAT THE TWO TRUTHS ARE
UNTENABLE

- (106) [Suppose you object]
“But if it were the case that conventional truth does not exist [at all]
Then how can there be two truths?
Moreover, if conventionalities [arise by means of] other [power],
Then how can sentient beings transcend sorrow?”
- (107) [Well] this [mode is by means of] another conceptual [deceptive] mind,
But this is not our mode of conventionality.
If it is ascertained afterwards, it [still] exists;
[And if not] the conventionality does not exist.
- (108) Both the conceptual thought and the object of investigation
Are mutually dependent.
And by dependence on [worldly] acceptance
All objects of analysis are expressed.
- (109) [Suppose you object]
“If the analytical intelligence that
Examines [whether or not an object exists intrinsically]
Is [subject to] examination [in turn],
This leads to an infinite regress.

- (110) [Well] when the object of analytical enquiry is being examined,
The analytical enquiry has no basis.
And because of being without a basis, it does not arise:
That is called [natural] nirvana.
- (111) For these two to truly [exist] [as the Realists] hold
Is hard to maintain.
[Because] if an object is established [as truly existent]
by the power of a cognition,
Then what is the basis [of reasoning] for the existence of cognition?
- (112) And if a cognition is established from [the power of]
the object of cognition,
Then what is the basis [of reasoning] for [the true] existence
of the object of cognition?
Their existence [is established] by the power of mutual [dependence],
Which entails that both would be not [truly] existent.
- (113) [For example] if [a man] without a child is not a father,
[Then] by whom is a child sired?
[Because] in the absence of a child, there can be no father.
Again, the two [subject/object] are not [truly] existent.
- (114) [Suppose you ask]
“A sprout grows from a seed,
And just as [the true existence of] the seed is indicated by the [sprout],
By the arising of a cognition from the object of cognition,
Why cannot its [true] existence [also] be realised?”
- (115) [Well] if [the seed is realised by] a cognition
Different from [the sprout]
By what [reasoning] is [the true] existence of the cognition
Which is inferred through its apprehension of an object established?

LOGIC THAT ESTABLISHES "EMPTINESS"

(A) REASONING FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF CAUSE

(1) REJECTING CAUSELESS PRODUCTION

(116) [Charvakas assert]: By direct perception of the conventional world,

All causes are seen.

[After all] the diverse parts of [anything] like a lotus –
stalks and so forth -

Grow by means of diverse causes.

(117) Suppose [you ask],

“What has produced [those] diverse causes?”

[Well] a diversity of previous causes.

And [suppose you ask further], “Why does a cause have
the ability to give rise to an effect?”

[Well] due to the power of previous causes.

(2) REJECTING PRODUCTION FROM PERMANENT CAUSES

(118) If [as the Nyaya-Vaisheshikas assert] [the Powerful Lord] Ishvara

were the cause of the world,

Tell me, what is Ishvara in fact?

If you say, “The elements,” then so be it,

But why [all] the fuss over a mere name?

(119) However, earth and the rest have multiple parts,

Are impermanent, inanimate and not divine;

Trod on and unclean.

So these cannot be the [Powerful Lord] Ishvara.

(120) Ishvara cannot be space, because [space] is a non-impelling [force].

He cannot be the self, since that has been refuted before.

And even [if you say], “He is the creator which is inconceivable,”

Well then, what is the use of discussing the inconceivable?

- (121) And what could it be that he wished to create? The self?
Well, are not [the self], the earth and the rest [of the elements],
And Ishvara supposed to be eternal by nature?
Cognition arises from the object of cognition.
- (122) Happiness and suffering have arisen since beginningless
[time] from karma.
So tell me, what has been created [by Ishvara]?
And if there is no beginning to the cause,
How can there be a beginning to the effect?
- (123) And why does he not create continually
Since he does not depend on anything else?
If nothing exists that was not created by him,
On what does he depend [in order to create]?
- (124) If [the creation] depends [on other conditions],
the collection [of the conditions] would be the cause,
And not Ishvara.
[For] when [the conditions] are gathered, no power
can impede the creation.
And in their absence, [Ishvara] has no power to create.
- (125) And if [the Powerful Lord] Ishvara must create lacking a wish to [create],
It absurdly follows that he is under the compulsion of something else.
While if [creation is done] when he “wants” then he is
under the power of “want.”
So how is he “Ishvara” [the Powerful Lord], when creations
are done that way?
- (126) Those [Mimamsakas] who assert particles to be the permanent [creator]
Have already been disproved above.
While the Samkhyas assert
Permanent Primal Substance as the cause of the world.

(3) REJECTING PRODUCTION FROM “PERMANENT PRIMAL SUBSTANCE”

- (127) [For Samkyas] the universal constituents,
 [Known as] courage [sattva, pleasure], particles [rajas, pain], and
 darkness [tamas, neutral sensation]
 When abiding in balance are called Primal Substance;
 [While their] imbalance is said to be the migrators/[manifestations].
- (128) But it is illogical for a [partless] unity to have a threefold nature;
 Therefore, it does not exist.
 Likewise, the universal constituents cannot be [truly] existent,
 Because each of them also has three aspects.
- (129) And in the absence of the universal constituents,
 The [true] existence of sound and the rest becomes very far-fetched.
 Moreover, it is impossible for pleasure and so on
 To exist in non-sentient clothing and the like.
- (130) If functional things are of the nature of their causes.
 [Well] have not functional things already been analyzed?
 [In any case] the causes for you are the very pleasure and so on:
 But cotton clothing and the like do not arise from those.
- (131) And, pleasure and so on arise from cotton clothing and the like,
 Then since these do not exist, pleasure and so on do not exist..
 Moreover, even the permanence of pleasure and so on
 Has never been seen.
- (132) If manifest pleasure and so on are [truly] existent,
 Why is [their] experience not perceived?
 [Suppose you say] “the [experience] turns into a subtle [state]”,
 [Well] how can it be [both] gross and subtle?

- (133) If it becomes subtle [and non-manifest] after having left
its gross [manifest] state,
These gross and subtle states are impermanent.
So why not accept
All functional things as impermanent?
- (134) And if the gross [manifest] state is no different from pleasure [itself],
Then the manifest pleasure is impermanent.
Suppose you assert, “But something totally nonexistent [in the cause]
Could not be produced, because of its being non-existent.”
- (135) Even if you do not accept the production of an evident phenomenon,
Still this is actually the case.
And if an effect exists in its cause,
Then consuming food would be eating excrement!
- (136) And [why not buy] and wear cotton seed [for less cost than]
the price of cotton clothing?
Suppose [you say], “[Although] common people do not see [it],
because of ignorance,
That is precisely the position
[Established] by [Kapila] the Knower of Reality.”
- (137) [Well] cognition of that must [also] exist
In common people, so why do [they] not see it?
Suppose [you answer] “[Because] common people are
not valid cognizers [of that].”
[Well then] what they see as manifest [also] is not true.
- (138) [Suppose you retort],
“[But you too assert that] a valid cognizer [for the common
world] is not a valid cognizer.
Then wouldn’t what was cognized by it [also] become false,
And therefore, in actuality, meditation on the emptiness
[Of functional phenomena] becomes untenable?”

- (139) Without having identified the object of [negation]
which is imputation, ..
The absence of that object cannot be apprehended.
Therefore, whatever is a false object lacks entity,
Which clearly indicates its falsity.
- (140) Thus, upon the death of a child in a dream,
The conceptual thought, 'He does not exist'
Is a hindrance to [thinking of] his existence.
And yet that ['the child does not exist'] is false.

SUMMARY

- (141) Therefore, when analysed in that way,
Nothing exists causelessly.
[Things] do not exist in their conditions,
Whether individually or collectively.
- (142) [A thing] does not emerge from something else;
Does not abide nor does it go.
[So] any thing viewed as truly existent by ignorance,
How is it different from an illusion?

(B) REASONING OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION TO ESTABLISH THE VIEW OF "SELFLESSNESS"

- (143) [So for] any thing emanated by a magician,
Or any thing emanated by causes:
[[if what is produced exists intrinsically then examine]
where it comes from.
And also where it goes,
- (144) How can there be true existence
In some virtual object like a reflection,
Which is seen [only] in conjunction with something [else]
And which does not exist when that is absent?

(C) REASONING TO ESTABLISH “EMPTINESS”
FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF EFFECT

- (145) For a functional thing that is existent,
What need is there for a cause?
Then again, if that is not existent,
What need is there for a cause?
- (146) There can be no transformation of a non-existent thing
[into an existent thing],
Even by means of a hundred million causes!
How can a thing in that state [of non-existence] become
an [existent] thing?
But what else could be transformed into [an existent] functional thing?
- (147) Since functional things cannot possibly exist at the time
of the absence of functional [things].
When will they come to exist as functional things?
Without production of a functional thing,
[A non-thing] cannot be freed from being a non-functional thing.
- (148) Without being freed from non-functional things,
No occasion will occur for a functional thing to exist.
And a functional thing cannot change to a state of non-functionality,
Because [then] it would absurdly follow that it had two true natures.
- (149) In that way, as cessation does not [truly] exist,
And [the arising] of functional things does not [truly] exist either,
All wandering beings at all times
Never are [truly] arising nor [truly] ceasing.

SAMENESS OF SAMSA RA AND NIRVANA ON THE ULTIMATE LEVEL

- (150) [Therefore] wandering beings resemble dreams.
Upon analysis, they are like plantain trees.
Whether they are released or not released from sorrow
Ultimately, there is no difference.

ADVICE ON THE NEED TO STRIVE TO REALISE EMPTINESS

(A) WHAT IS THE REALITY?

- (151) With all phenomena empty in that way,
 What is there to gain?
 What is there to lose?
 Who is there to respect or scorn?
- (152) From where does pleasure or pain arise?
 What is there to dislike or like?
 When investigated at the ultimate level
 What [object] is craved by which [agent]?
- (153) Upon analysis, [what] world of living beings [is there]
 That will die here?
 Who is there who will come into existence?
 Who is there who has existed?
 Who is a relative? [Who is] a friend?
- (154) Those of my type, please understand
 That everything is like space.

(B) DRAWBACKS OF SAMBARA

But those wishing for happiness for a "self"
 Get agitated and overexcited

- (155) Through causes [such as] fights and festivities;
 Then from the [resulting] distress and over-exertion, and
 [Disheartening] disputes, they cut and stab each other.
 Thus passing their lives in tremendous difficulties due to
 [their] negative deeds.
- (156) Then, [despite] coming to the favourable states of birth
 over and over again, and
 So often experiencing manifold pleasures,
 After death, they fall to [experience]
 The unbearable sufferings of the bad states of birth for a very long time.

- (157) In [cyclic] existence, cliffs [to fall from] are aplenty;
And there [in samsara], one remains deprived of
[the understanding] of reality
But since [samsara and nirvana] mutually contradict one another,
[one unceasingly cycles in Samsara]
In [cyclic] existence, nothing [compares with] the realisation
of the reality.
- (158) There, too, are incomparable and unbearable
Oceans of suffering beyond any end;
In [samsara], there is little strength;
The life span is too short.
- (159) There, as well, with activities for longevity and health,
With hunger and exhaustion,
With sleep and harms, and likewise
With fruitlessly keeping company with childish people,
- (160) Life passes quickly and in vain.
Yet, analytical wisdom is so difficult to gain!
Furthermore, where is there [in samsara] a means
To eliminate the habituated distractions?
- (161) Again, [when making effort to be free], the demon is striving there
To bring about a fall to the most awful states of rebirth.
[In higher births, because] there are too many false paths,
Also it is difficult to transcend “doubt.”
- (162) And it is difficult to gain respite again,
And the appearance of a Buddha is extremely difficult to find,
And the rapids of disturbing emotion are so difficult to abandon.
Alas, suffering will just go on unceasingly.

- (163) And they fail to see their own suffering,
Although they are infested with extreme suffering.
Oh dear, this really is the cause to lament
For those who are caught in the rapids of suffering
- (164) For example, some people perform ablutions and ablutions,
Then they jump into fire again and again,
Even though in terrible states of suffering,
They believe themselves to be happy.
- (165) Likewise, there are those who frolic about,
[Fooling around], as if there were no old age and death.
First, they will lose their lives,
And then fall to a worse state of rebirth.

THE MODE OF APPREHENSION OF THE GREAT COMPASSION

- (166) Oh! When shall I come to bring peace
To those tormented by the fires of suffering like these?
With a rain happiness from my collection,
Pouring forth from the clouds of my merit?
- (167) Oh! When shall [I] respectfully accumulate the store of merit
Through [insight into] the emptiness of the [object] of apprehension,
And then teach emptiness to those
Who have been ruined by [such] an object of apprehension.

✧

This rendering of the Ninth, Wisdom chapter of Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life was prepared by Geshe Dorji Damdul with editing assistance from Jeremy Russell and Ven. Tenzin Nordron for the March and August 2006 teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Thekchen Chöling. This text is based on and indebted to an earlier translation by Dr Alex Berzin.



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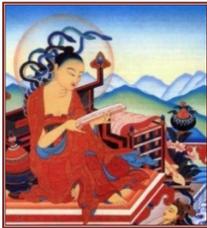
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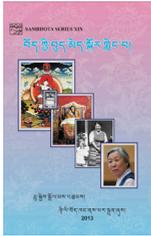
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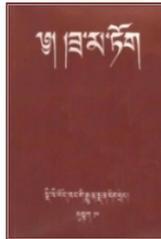
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