

1.1.4.2. CONTRADICTION OF ASSERTING THAT IT CREATES VIRTUE AND NON-VIRTUE BUT DOES NOT EXPERIENCE THEIR MATURATION

*What is more illogical
Than that the attributes should always
Know how to construct homes and so forth
But not know how to experience them?* 241

As the commentary explains:

Since such a contention contradicts reason and conflicts with worldly convention, it is utterly incorrect. What is more illogical than to claim that the attributes whose nature is pleasure, pain and equanimity know how to construct homes and so forth but do not know how to experience these amenities? It contradicts both reason and convention.

This quite vividly and clearly explains the absurdity of the Samkya assertion. They assert that it is the motility I-principle that allows the person associated with the I-principle to be able to stretch out, to sit down and to feel heaviness in the body and so forth. This I-principle that provides the motility allowing the person to for example sleep and relax lay back and so forth is due to the attributes of darkness. However they also assert that the I-principle doesn't experience the actions. Thus what is being asserted here is an absurdity that goes against not only logic but also conventional perception. So their assertion is contradicted even on a conventional level.

1.1.4.3. REFUTING THAT A PERMANENT SELF IS THE AGENT OF ACTIONS AND EXPERIENCER OF THEIR MATURATION

This relates to an assertion by the Vaisesika non-Buddhist school that there is a self, who is the one who initiates actions, but there are actions where there is no doer of the action.

Vaisesika assertion: The self alone is the doer of actions and the experiencer of their maturation.

Answer: If that is so, the self cannot be permanent.

*The active is not permanent.
The ubiquitous is actionless.
The actionless is like the non-existent.
Why do you not prefer selflessness?* 242

Here the Vaisesika assert that the self is a doer of actions. But they also assert the self as being permanent. So if they accept the assertion that the self is a doer then they cannot also assert the self as being permanent.

If the self is an agent it must be accepted as causing action. If it does not perform actions it is unsuitable as an agent. If they assert the self to be the doer of an agent, then it could not be permanent. If it does not perform the action then it cannot be called an agent. If it is an agent then because it performs action, 'You could not assert it as being permanent'.

Furthermore:

That which performs actions like coming and going is not permanent since one must admit that it differs from before.

This is pointing out how it cannot be permanent if there are actions of coming and going, as that indicates that there is a change taking place.

When an action is performed then there has to be a change due to that action. There should be a difference between the latter part of an action and the earlier part, because that is the very notion of an action - what was not done earlier is done later. 'That indicates that there is a change from the earlier to the later, thus you cannot claim it to be permanent', is the refutation.

As the commentary states:

Something the whole of which is everywhere all the time does not perform activities such as coming and going, since there is no place or time it does not occupy.

That is how the earlier assertion is refuted. Then Vaisesikas reply:

Assertion: Well then, an actionless self exists.

With this assertion that there is a self which is actionless this further refutation is presented:

Since an actionless self is as non-existent as a sky flower, why do you not prefer selflessness? It is worth doing so, for understanding it frees one from all fears.

Following the earlier refutations of their assertion the Vaisesika come to a point of saying that a self exists and that it is an actionless self.

From the Prasangika point of view there is no such thing as an actionless self - it is the same as a sky flower. The analogy of a sky flower is that no flower grows in the sky, so it is a non-existent phenomena. It is far better to assert, as we do, that there is the selflessness of a person rather than asserting that there is a self that is actionless. While asserting an actionless self is meaningless, the assertion of selflessness will free one from all fears and lead one to liberation.

1.2. General refutation

This is sub-divided into four:

- 1.2.1. Erroneousness of thinking a personal self exists
- 1.2.2. Impossibility of liberation from cyclic existence for a permanent self
- 1.2.3. Inappropriateness of asserting the existence of a self during liberation
- 1.2.4. Refuting a substantially established liberated [person] without a self

1.2.1. Erroneousness of thinking a personal self exists

The implied assertion is:

It follows that the conception of a personal self is erroneous. Since the self, if it existed, would do so by way of its own entity, it should appear without differences.

*Some see it as ubiquitous and for some
The person is the mere [size of the] body.
Some see it as a mere particle.
The wise see it as non-existent.* 243

If a self exists in of itself, or was inherently existent, or truly existent, then whoever sees it would have to see it in that way. It would have to appear exactly in the same way to who ever saw it. However that is not the case.

cyclic existence, because during liberation the liberated self is basically a continuity of the self of cyclic existence.

1.3. Eliminating any fault of annihilation with regard to selflessness

In our system we assert selflessness the objection might arise that if there is selflessness then there will be annihilation. The refutation of annihilation in regard to selflessness is sub-divided into four:

1.3.1. Although there is no self, there is no danger of the composite and transitory discontinuing

1.3.2. Even if a self exists, it is unsuitable as the cause that starts and stops [production]

1.3.3. Producers and that which is produced exist in relation only to impermanent things

1.3.4. Showing briefly how permanence and annihilation are avoided in terms of the conventional

1.3.1. Although there is no self, there is no danger of the composite and transitory discontinuing

This point was brought up earlier. If we assert selflessness then the doubt may arise that there is a discontinuation of the transitory collection, which is the aggregates and the self. However there is no such fault as that.

Assertion: If there is no self, composite things whose nature is to disintegrate moment by moment would discontinue because of disintegrating as soon as they are produced.

Answer:

If the impermanent discontinues 247
How could there be grass at present?
If, indeed, this were true,
No one would have ignorance either.

The non-Buddhist schools assert that the self is permanent. Their contention is that if we were to assert the self as being impermanent then it would have to discontinue, because the moment that it is produced it changes and disintegrates. The refutation to that assertion is:

Understanding impermanence to mean discontinuation is unacceptable. If it did, how could there today be fields and grass whose continuity is beginningless? There should not be any, for if impermanence meant discontinuation, then whatever is impermanent would have the defect of discontinuing. If the view that whatever is impermanent discontinues were true, it follows that no one would have ignorance because it is impermanent. It also follows that pleasure and desire would not occur either.

1.3.2. Even if a self exists, it is unsuitable as the cause that starts and stops [production]

Even if the self exists 248
Form is seen to arise from other [causes],
To continue by virtue of others
And to disintegrate through others.

The meaning of the verse is explained in the commentary thus:

It follows that even if the self exists, it is not acceptable as the initiating cause of things which are seen to arise exclusively from other causes. Fire arises

from the contact between sunlight and a fire-crystal, water from the contact between moonlight and a water-crystal, the sprout from the seed, and forms such as the sense organs from an earlier stage of the fetus. They continue because of other factors: fire keeps burning because of fuel and so forth and just as it does not burn when there is insufficient fuel, they disintegrate through other factors. The self cannot exist for if it did, it alone should produce all effects.

1.3.3. Producers and that which is produced exist in relation only to impermanent things

Just as the sprout which is a product 249
Is produced from a product, the seed,
Similarly all that is impermanent
Comes from the impermanent.

An effect cannot arise from something permanent and thus, just as the sprout, a product, arises from the seed which is a products all that is impermanent comes from impermanent causes. Therefore composite things, undergoing production and disintegration moment by moment, can never be permanent nor discontinue.

The main point here is that if something was permanent then it could not produce anything, nothing could arise, and no effects could be produced. The interdependent relationship between a cause and an effect exists only within impermanent phenomena and cannot exist within permanent phenomena.

1.3.4. Showing briefly how permanence and annihilation are avoided in terms of the conventional

The thunderbolts of permanence and annihilation which strike and destroy the relationship of cause and effect between composite things are driven off to a distance by the wise with the mantra of dependent arising.

Since functional things arise 250
There is no discontinuation
And because they cease
There is no permanence.

Since resultant things like sprouts arise and are produced, the cause's continuum is not in danger of being annihilated. Since the seed ceases once the sprout has been produced, the cause is not in danger of being permanent.

There is no danger of either annihilation or permanence in instances of a cause and effect sequence.

This is of course a refutation of the non-Buddhist assertion that the reason why they assert a person to be permanent is because they fear the annihilation of the person. Thus they assert a person as being permanent. However according to the Buddhist school there is no danger of annihilation. With the external cause and effect of the seed and the sprout the first moment of the seed remains in the continuation. We can obviously see that with external phenomena. Likewise establishing the person as being permanent phenomena will not bring about the fault of the person or the self discontinuing or being annihilated.

The Fundamental [Treatise Called] Wisdom says:
Whatever has arisen depending on something
Is firstly not [one with] it
and so forth.

In brief this shows how permanence and annihilation are avoided in relation to the conventional.

The summarising stanza from Gyalsab Rinpoche is:

Through familiarity with meditating on
The impermanence suffering and uncleanness of
cyclic existence,
Abandon the limitless views of the self,
Both innate and those imputed by tenets.

The meaning of this verse is quite clear. Through familiarity with meditating on impermanence, suffering and the uncleanness of cyclic existence as explained earlier, one abandons the limitless views of the self. 'Limitless views of the self' indicates the innate views and those views imputed by tenets. The 'views imputed by tenets' relates to the distorted views of the self that were presented earlier with the assertions of the non-Buddhist schools. 'Innate views' refers to the innate grasping at the self that we have had from beginningless times, and our ignorance of the innate grasping at the self that we have. So both innate grasping at the self, as well as the self that is imputed by tenets are overcome through meditation.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

This is the tenth chapter from the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, showing how to meditate on refuting the self.

I think we can cover chapter 11 in about two sessions and then we can spend more time on chapter 12.

The practical benefit that we can derive from studying texts like this is that their complexity shows how the Buddha taught the true path by firstly overcoming all the different misconceptions. Studying and trying to gain an understanding of these texts is worthwhile, because they will help to generate strong faith in the Buddha. The Buddha taught the right view by negating the many other distorted views. In this way he established the right view, which once established becomes very firm and stable, and can lead us to our ultimate goals. So it is very useful for us to really gain some understanding of how the Buddha's teachings are presented and thus gain a strong faith in the skilful means the Buddha used in leading us disciples onto the virtuous and righteous path.

In that way it is good for us to make strong aspirational prayers such as, 'While striving for the right view in following the righteous path, may I never encounter the wrong views of the mistaken path, and may I never be influenced by these wrong views'.

We can also make the strong aspiration, 'May I never separated from such a perfect unmistakable path such as the Buddha's teachings. It is amazing that I have this opportunity now to be able to study and practice such a pure path, and it is definitely the result of numerous

previous merits that I have created in the past'. While one appreciates the great opportunity one has now, one makes strong aspirations to never be separated in the future from this pure path, and to be continuously able to engage in practice and further study, and gain more and more understanding and knowledge of the unmistakable pure path leading to liberation and enlightenment. It will definitely benefit us, if we make such aspirational prayers.

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