

Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

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As usual, let us begin by developing a positive motivation such as, in order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

CHAPTER XIV REFUTING EXTREME CONCEPTIONS¹

It is good to understand the meaning of the outline. In general, extreme conceptions refers to the two extremes of the nihilistic view and the view of eternalism. However in this heading particularly it refers to refuting the view of eternalism, which is viewing phenomena as being truly established, truly existent, existent by way of its own entity or existing by way of its own characteristics. The extreme view of nihilism is where one has the view that if things were to lack inherent existence or true existence, then things could not exist at all.

Here one must understand that refuting extreme conceptions does not mean refuting the existence of the prevalent wrong view itself, but rather it means refuting the mode of apprehension of that wrong view.

The two main subdivisions of the chapter are:

1. Presenting the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. Presenting the material in the chapter

This section is subdivided into four main categories:

- 1.1. Proving that functional things are empty of inherent existence
- 1.2. Showing the cause for mistaking functional things as permanent and truly existent
- 1.3. Briefly showing the reasoning that establishes absence of true existence
- 1.4. Showing the need to understand absence of true existence

¹ In the overall structure of the text this is actually 3.2.2.1.2.5., but for the sake of clarity numbering starts anew with each chapter.

The text has four subdivisions:

1. Meaning of the title
2. Translator's prostration
3. Meaning of the text
4. Colophon or conclusion

Section 3 Meaning of the text has two subdivisions:

- 3.1 An overview of the text
- 3.2 Specific explanation of the different chapters, which has two outlines:
 - 3.2.1. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on illusory conventional truth
 - 3.2.2. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on ultimate truth, the first section of which is:
 - 3.2.2.1 Extensively explaining ultimate truth, which in turn has three sub-headings:
 - 3.2.2.1.1. General refutation of true existence by refuting permanent functional phenomena
 - 3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena, to which this chapter belongs
 - 3.2.2.1.3. Refuting the inherent existence of production, duration and disintegration, the characteristics of products

1.1. Proving that functional things are empty of inherent existence

Again, this heading is subdivided into two:

- 1.1.1. Brief exposition
- 1.1.2. Extensive explanation

1.1.1. Brief exposition

Question: If, like the ring formed by a firebrand and so forth, worldly existence, because of being a dependent arising, does not exist inherently, what has inherent existence?

This question relates to the analogies that were given earlier, which showed that the lack of true existence, or inherent existence, is like a firebrand; even though there appears to be a firebrand it is actually an illusion that does not exist. Worldly existence is similar to that.

Answer: Not the slightest thing has inherent existence.

If a thing did not depend

On anything else at all

It would be self-established,

But such a thing exists nowhere.

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As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Anything existing by way of its own entity would not rely on anything else at all, but not the least thing is independent or exists without relying on something else.

This explains that things do not exist by way of their own entity, but are interdependent.

If anything existed inherently, independence would be established as its nature when examined by the reasoning which investigates the ultimate, yet this does not exist anywhere.

The commentary explains that there are many different types of reasonings that prove the lack of inherent existence. One of the supreme reasons establishing the lack of inherent existence is that because things are interdependent or dependent originations they cannot exist inherently, and it is this reasoning that is being established here.

A mode of existence of phenomena not merely posited by nominal convention is known as independent existence, existence by way of their entity, existence by way of their character, inherent existence and true existence.

This is establishing the different terminologies that are used for the object of negation.

This clearly indicates the object of negation through whose refutation there is no focus for conceptions of true existence.

What is being established here is that the object of apprehension of the misconception that perceives true existence, or independent existence, or inherent existence, does not exist as perceived.

Since Candrakirti's commentary repeatedly mentions qualifying the object of negation when refuting fabrications of true existence, one should not deprecate the Madhyamika view.

When the object of negation is presented in the teachings, there are instances where it may appear that the actual existence of phenomena is being negated. But that is clearly not the case, as it is stated clearly in earlier and later parts of the text that the non-existence of any phenomena refers to the non-existence of inherent existence, or independent existence. So what is being negated is the inherent existence or the independent existence of phenomena, and not the

actual existence of phenomena. If this is not understood clearly then there is the danger of deprecating the Madhyamika system.

This is also clearly explained in other texts as well. For example, in the beginning of the *Heart Sutra*, it mentions that things are empty of inherent existence, and then goes on to state that there is no form, no sound and so forth. The qualifying object of negation (empty of inherent existence) is established earlier in the sutra, so one needs to understand that the actual meaning of no form etc., implies that there is no form existing inherently, or by way of its own characteristic.

This needs to be clearly understood not only in mere words, but with a deeper understanding of what the object of negation means. Otherwise when the object of negation is presented, there is the danger of developing a wrong view about the Madhyamika view. For example, there are some who feel that the Madhyamikas are extremists, because they negate existence altogether. If one does not have a deeper understanding of what is presented in the teachings then there is the danger that we, too, may develop the wrong view when the object of negation is presented, thinking that things are being presented as being entirely empty of existence. So, it is important to understand that what is being negated is not the actual existence of the particular object, or phenomena in general, but the inherent or true existence of any phenomenon.

Thus the object of negation should be clearly understood as presented in this text and other commentaries. The selflessness of any phenomenon is the negation of that phenomenon existing independently from its own side, i.e. by way of not having to rely on anything else for its existence. Selflessness is classified into two types—selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the object of negation one must first develop a clear understanding of what is being negated. If we were to take a vase or a pot, for example, try to imagine how the vase would exist if it were truly existent, or inherently existent. What would such an existence mean? When one investigates further into the possibility of it existing truly, or inherently, or independently, then one comes to understand that that would mean that the vase would have to exist from its own side—independently. This means that the pot does not have to rely on any other causes and conditions for its existence, and exists in its own right, from its own side, without depending on anything else. Through that investigation, one reasons whether a vase or any other phenomena could exist in that way in reality. One will then come to the correct conclusion and understanding, which is that nothing can exist independently from its own side.

1.1.2. Extensive explanation

The extensive explanation is subdivided into four:

1.1.2.1. Refuting a truly existent composite by examining the four possibilities

1.1.2.2. Refuting truly existent components

1.1.2.3. Refutation by examining for singleness or plurality

1.1.2.4. Applying reasoning which negates the four possibilities in other cases

1.1.2.1. REFUTING A TRULY EXISTENT COMPOSITE BY EXAMINING THE FOUR POSSIBILITIES

This has two subdivisions:

1.1.2.1.1. Exposition

1.1.2.1.2. Explanation

1.1.2.1.1. EXPOSITION

If the composite known as “pot” exists by way of its own entity, are the visible form and the pot one or different?

“The form is a pot” they are not one.

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The pot that has form is not separate.

The pot does not have form,

Nor does the form have a pot.

The pot is a composite because, as explained earlier, it is a compilation of the eight substances. So ‘if the pot itself were to exist by way of its own entity or inherently’, then ‘are the visible form and the pot one or different’ i.e. separate?

If they are inherently one then:

In the first case it follows that the form and the pot in the statement “The form is a pot” are not inherently one, otherwise there would be a pot wherever there was a visible form.

If the pot and its form were inherently one then the absurdity that would arise is that wherever there is form, there would have to also be pot. Thus the absurdity that arises would be that there would be a pot wherever form exists.

In order to refute that, this counter-statement is presented:

One might think that the pot which is something distinct from visible form possessed form the way Devadatta possesses a cow, as something separate.

The counter argument that if the pot and form were to be inherently one, then wherever there is form there is a pot, cannot be accepted. It is an absurdity that obviously goes against reality. The pot is distinct from visible form and thus possesses form, just as in the example given: Devadatta possesses a cow and thus he and the cow are separate.

In order to refute this the commentary explains:

However it follows that the pot which has form is not inherently separate from the form, otherwise it would be apprehensible independently of its form.

What is being established here in refutation of that counter statement is, if you say that the pot is inherently separate from the form, then it ‘is not inherently separate from the form’, because if it were to be separate from its form then it could be apprehended independently of its form. This means that you could apprehend the pot without its form but that also defies obvious reality. You cannot apprehend a pot without its form, thus pot and form could not be inherently separate.

If there were to be a pot that is inherently separate from form then that would mean that there is no correlation between pot and form whatsoever—they would be completely separate entities. If that were the case then you would have to be able to perceive a pot or vase without depending on the form.

As the commentary further explains:

The pot does not have form as something apart which depends upon it, nor does the form have a pot dependent upon it, like a dish and its contents, because neither exists inherently.

If pot and form were to be inherently separate then the pot and its form could not be a base. Every object has the characteristics of being a base and something that is dependent or based upon it. A table serves as a base for the objects placed upon it, such as a plate and the contents of the plate. So if pot and form were to be inherently separate then one could not establish them as being the base and what is

dependent upon it. The reason that is given here is that this is because neither pot nor form exists inherently.

1.1.2.1.2. EXPLANATION

This heading is subdivided into two:

1.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting other sectarians

1.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting our own sectarians

1.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting other sectarians

Refuting other sectarians is also subdivided into two:

1.1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the characteristics

1.1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that which is characterized

1.1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the characteristics

This heading is has five subdivisions:

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting the substantial entity as basis for a distinct generality

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting it as a basis for distinct attributes

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3. Showing other reasoning which refutes the composite as a truly existent single unit

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting truly existent production of the pot from its causes

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.5. Refuting truly existent production by virtue of dependence on parts

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting the substantial entity as basis for a distinct generality

Vaisesika assertion: Though the pot and its form are not different substantial entities, existence and the pot are.

The Vaisheshikas assert that the pot and its form are not different substantial entities, but that existence and pot are different. So the Vaisesika have different ways of establishing different entities.

The pot is a substantial entity and is said to exist through its connection with the great generality "existence," which is something separate from it.

The pot is a substantial entity and it has a connection with what is called a great generality, asserted by the Vaisheshikas as being existence. Existence itself as a whole is referred to as the 'great generality', and it is separate from the pot.

Answer:

Since the two are seen to have dissimilar Characteristics, if the pot is separate From existence, why would existence Not also be separate from the pot? 328

Nine substances, as explained earlier, are established by the Vaisheshikas.² These are the four elements, earth, water, fire, and air, together with space, time, direction, self and mind.

As the commentary explains:

Existence and the pot are seen to have the dissimilar characteristics of a generality and of a specific. It is not feasible for the pot to be a substantial entity which is separate from existence,

Existence is called a generality whereas the pot is specific, so existence and the pot have the dissimilar characteristics of generality and specific. It is first established that generality and specific have dissimilar characteristics, and that existence is a generality whereas the pot is specific. So as the commentary explains, 'It is not feasible for the pot to be a substantial entity which is separate from existence':

...for if it were, why would existence not be a separate entity from the pot? It follows that it would be. If this is accepted, the pot is nonexistent.

In order to refute their assertion, what is being established is that if existence were to be a separate entity from the pot then the pot would cease to have any entity or existence, and so it would cease to be a thing. If the pot ceased to be a thing then the pot would be non-existent, as a pot could not exist if it ceases to be a thing.

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting it as a basis for distinct attributes

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.1. Actual meaning

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.2. Inconsistency with the assertion that one attribute cannot rely on another attribute

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.1. Actual meaning

Assertion: The substantial entity, the pot, exists because it acts as a basis for attributes, such as one and two, which are distinct from it.

A substantial entity is a composite of the nine substances of the four elements, earth, water, fire, and air, together with space, time, direction, self and mind, and it is said the very fact that the pot is a composite of the nine substances establishes it as being an existence.

As with all other existence, there are many attributes to the substances that make up a pot. For example the attributes of the four elements are said to be taste, form, smell and touch, whereas sound is said to be the attributes of space. Then there are the many attributes of the self such as different emotions and mental states like anger, pride and so forth. According to the Vaisheshikas there are six different attributes of the self which you can look up³. The attributes of each substance are said to be distinct from the actual entity, such as a pot.

Answer: "Attribute" and "substantial entity" are different words and have different meanings.

The attributes mentioned earlier in the above assertion are numerate attributes, such 'one' or 'two'. That which is able to differentiate between one and two pots and so forth is an attribute of a pot. So attribute and substantial entity are different words and have different meanings. That is what is being established.

*If one is not accepted as the pot
The pot also is not one.*

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The commentary explains the meaning of these lines thus:

If the number one is not accepted as the pot, the pot is not one either because, like two and so forth, these are different words and have different meanings. If this is accepted, the term and thought "one" do not validly apply to the pot.

Basically this is establishing that 'one' and 'two' and so forth have completely different meanings.

Assertion: The pot is one by virtue of possessing the attribute one, but one is not the pot.

The main assertion here is that what is being refuted is that 'one', which is an attribute of vase, could not be entirely inherently one with the vase. If, for example, the number one, or the sound one, or the meaning 'one', was inherently one with the vase then vase and 'one' would have to be exactly the same, meaning that when you said 'one' you would have to understand that it meant vase and when you said vase it would immediately imply that you are speaking about 'one'. However we can see that there is obviously a difference, even in the very pronunciation of the words 'one' and 'vase'. They are obviously distinct even in their sound. That in itself shows that there is a distinction. Besides there

² See, for example, 17 July 2007.

³ See 18 May 2004.

is the distinction in the meaning in that 'one' refers to a particular number of something, whereas vase has another meaning. In refuting the Vaisheshika opponents, what is being established is that if 'one' and vase were to be inherently one and not distinct then they would have to be the same in every aspect; the very utterance of vase and 'one' would have to have the same meaning and so forth. But there are obvious differences between the two.

The commentary gives this answer to the above assertion:

Answer:

*Moreover possession is not reciprocal, 329cd
Therefore also it is not one.*

And goes on to explain:

Possession occurs between two similar things, as in the case of consciousness, and not between dissimilar things. Moreover there is no reciprocal possession between the pot and one, since the pot possesses one, but one does not possess the pot. The pot is also not one because of being a separate entity from one.

What is being established here is that the pot and 'one' could not be inherently one and the same. The pot is also not one, because it is a separate entity from one.

1.1.2.1.2.1.2.2. Inconsistency with the assertion that one attribute cannot rely on another attribute

The establishing statement is:

Furthermore, your contention that attributes qualify substantial entities but that one attribute does not qualify another is contradictory.

*If the form is the size of the substance, 330
Why is the form not large?*

As the commentary explains:

If the size of the substantial entity, the pot, and the size of its visible form are the same, why is the attribute form not large just as the substantial entity is large?

If the size of a substantial entity, the pot, and the size of its visible form are the same, then the absurdity that will be obvious to us is that there are, of course, different pots, which naturally implies that pots have different sizes and shapes and so forth, i.e. there are different attributes to the pots. What is being argued here is that the size of substantiality of the pot and the size of the form is the same, which is an absurdity. Therefore:

One must accept that the form has a separate attribute "large."

If the substantial entity, which is the pot, and the size of its visible form are the same, i.e. if the substantial entity and its attributes are the same, then, as explained here 'one must accept that the form has a separate attribute "large".'

Basically this is establishing that the fault that would arise is that one would have to 'accept that form has a separate attribute "large"', which means that if the attributes themselves also have attributes, then second attributes have to be established to the first attributes. Then that would mean that there would be no end to subsequent attributes, which would be a fault. To further explain, if form itself is an attribute of vase, and if you say that form itself would have to have attributes such as large, small or big and so forth, then one has to establish further attributes to attributes.

The absurdity pointed out to the opponent is that if one has to establish second attributes to the attributes then that is contrary to your own assertions.

Objection: Small and large cannot qualify form, for according to our textual system, one attribute does not qualify another.

The Vaisheshika opponents say, 'According to our textual system we cannot establish that', and:

*If the opponent were not different 330cd
Scriptural sources could be cited.*

To that the answer is:

If your opponents were not from a school other than your own, you could cite your textual system to fault their argument, but it is inappropriate here, since we are engaged in rejecting these very tenets.

The Vaisheshikas cite their own scriptures to establish what they believe. What our own system is saying is, 'Such a practice is inappropriate here, because you are refuting our system. If you were presenting this to those who follow your system then that would be fine, but it is inappropriate to cite your scriptures to us, as these are the very tenets that we are rejecting. Rather you must either use logical reasons or conventional realities and terms to refute us'.

1.1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that which is characterised

Assertion: Even if distinct attributes like separateness are refuted, the pot which they characterize is not refuted and thus exists by way of its own entity.

Answer:

*By virtue of its characteristic 331
The characterized does not exist.
Such a thing has no existence
As something different from number and so forth.*

The attributes such as separateness and so forth were clearly refuted earlier, but the pot that the attributes characterise has not yet been specifically refuted as being inherently existent. Thus they come up with the doubt that maybe the pot exists by way of its own entity.

As the commentary explains:

If one contends that existence and so forth have the characteristic of accompanying things while the pot has the opposite characteristic, then by virtue of this opposite characteristic, the pot it characterizes does not exist anywhere by way of its own entity. Such a thing, distinct from numbers like one, two and so forth, has no existence as pot established by way of its own entity. In brief, something characterized which is a different entity from its characteristics and characteristics which are different entities from that which they characterize cannot be found.

The conclusion that is presented here is that, 'something characterized which is a different entity from its characteristics and characteristics which are different entities from that which they characterize cannot be found'. This means that both the object which is characterised, and the characteristics of that object such as the attributes, equally lack inherent existence, or existence by way of its own entity.

Having completed refuting other sectarians, we will continue with refuting our own sectarians in our next session.

*Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
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Edited Version*

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