

# Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

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Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [*meditation*]

With the generation of the bodhicitta motivation, we can now engage in the teachings. The meditation preceding our motivation is a way to help strengthen our motivation. The purpose of generating the motivation is to dispel any improper intentions in our mind, and basically to help subdue the mind. The stronger the positive state of mind we generate, the more likely it is we will be able to benefit others. Then, in turn, the more we benefit others, the more it will help us increase our good qualities and get rid of our negativities, thus bringing us closer to enlightenment.

If we wish to become enlightened, we need to consider practical ways by which we can proceed to get closer to enlightenment. Benefiting others and shunning actions that will harm them is a practical means of getting closer to enlightenment. So, while we're aiming for the long-term goal of enlightenment, in the meantime, on a practical level, we'll be able to contribute to the well-being of ourselves and others.

I'm relating this specifically in relation to a recent practice that some older students have been doing, and where others contributed, which is the fire puja. I've heard it went very well, and that people really helped each other. I see this as a good sign that the intention of helping each other has improved.

On the other hand, if someone is going through some difficulty, or an incident occurs involving someone, then instead of looking for ways to ease that situation, there might be occasions when others add more to the story and elaborate on the incident, or continue to talk about it, or spread rumours, etc. That is something which I consider to be like poison; that's definitely of no use, no benefit, at all.

If the person experiencing the difficulty gets to hear those comments about them, that is going to put them off coming here. They would not want to come to a centre like that, where they feel people are judging them, or talking about them, or spreading rumours about them. They would not want to come here. This is how we, as a centre, begin to close our doors to some people.

For that particular individual, who had an interest to come here initially and then stopped coming because of some incident like that, it would have harmed their ability to progress. For the centre also, even losing one person from coming to the centre, is a loss. If fewer people come to the centre, naturally it weakens the strength of the centre. For a centre to grow, it needs more people coming regularly.

We may think it's only one individual, but in fact those who have a connection with that individual would also be put off coming to the centre. When I was up in Chenrezig, I used to mention that we should not underestimate the gravity of not caring for even one person, because when that one person is

disappointed, it could prevent many others from coming as well.

What I am reminding you about, particularly those who have particular roles in the centre, is that it's very important to be mindful not to cause this kind of rift with people. In effect, it is a reminder for all of us to remember to try to put into practice Shantideva's incredible, practical advice. Shantideva has very effectively presented many methods and techniques, so whenever we have difficulties, we need to remember Shantideva's advice, and try to put it into practice.

One of our members who used to come regularly to the Centre, Susan, is not well now. As many of you will know, she is having difficulty with her breathing. I heard that some of the older students have taken the initiative to help out and go and visit and help in whatever way. When I heard that, I was very pleased, I feel that that is a very good sign of caring for each other.

When I hear about others caring in this way for those in need of help, it makes me feel good that a positive outcome of the Dharma is taking effect, through them giving such practical help and benefit. From my side, I've now reached an age where it's hard for me to go and do service in this way, but if there's others who can do this, it is good to maintain such service to others; I feel that there's a good legacy occurring here.

However, there have been many who have commented that my advice and the teachings that I present are helpful for others. So, I guess this is one way I'm contributing to helping others!

When I was at the Drolkar Centre last Sunday, there were a few who came up to me afterwards to thank me and made comments about how they were very touched and really enjoyed the teachings. Some even made comments later, saying how moved and touched they were seeing us having lunch together joyfully – laughing and in good spirit; apparently some were moved to tears. This shows that they had felt the good connection amongst the people there.

It's good for you to also consider that I am not just using words for the sake of sounding good, or making a lot of noise with no effect, as there are in fact those who feel the benefit. I'm just reassuring you that there is some benefit from what I share in the teachings.

## **2.3.1.2. Refuting the intellectually acquired self**

### **2.3.1.2.2. Refuting the self asserted to be matter by the Particularists**

In the earlier section, we covered the Samkhya's or Enumerators' views. This next section deals with the Particularists.

The verse relating to this is:

68. *The inanimate is also not the self  
Because it is inanimate, like a vase.  
Then if, 'because it is endowed with  
consciousness  
It is conscious,' it follows not knowing is  
eliminated.*

The commentary reads:

The self posited as matter without mind by the Naiyayika and Particularists is also not the self since it is inanimate, e.g., like a vase.

The Particularists say that:

*Particularists*: Although the self itself is matter, it possesses mind by way of compounded relation, and therefore one posits it as knowing objects.

The **Madhyamikas'** answer to that is:

*Madhyamika*: It follows the phenomenon of the self truly not previously knowing objects is then eliminated – because it knows objects through the power of subsequent other phenomena.

What is being presented is quite clear. We've also covered some of these points earlier. The main point is that the **Particularists** don't assert the self as being consciousness; for them the self is the aggregates. Therefore, they posit the self to be matter, rather than consciousness.

Their assertion of the self as matter is actually refuted by the **Madhyamikas** in the very opening line of the commentary, where it says: *the self posited as matter without mind by the Naiyayika and Particularists is also not a self* – in other words, what the **Particularists** posit to be a self is in fact not really a self – *because it is inanimate* – meaning that it doesn't have a mind. The example given is *like a vase* – so, the **Madhyamikas** are saying that this self that you posit is in fact no different to other objects of matter, such as a vase. Because the self you posit lacks a mind, it cannot be asserted as a person.

The **Particularists** respond by saying, *although the self itself is matter, it possesses a mind by way of compounded relation*. Basically, this means that, although the self is matter, because of its inter-relationship with other factors it comes to have a mind, and therefore, they posit the self to knowing objects. So, in dependence on 'other', the self will have a consciousness – and know objects. They also agree that a person or self has to be an object possessor and thus know objects.

The **Madhyamikas** then refute that assertion by saying, *it follows the phenomenon of the self truly not previously knowing objects is then eliminated – because it knows objects through the power of subsequent other phenomena*. In other words, what the **Particularists** posit as a self, which is matter and not consciousness, does not know objects previously; only by coming into relationship with something else does it come to know objects. Prior to that, the self does not know the object.

While the **Particularists** posit the self as matter, they also posit it as being permanent. So, the **Madhyamikas** say that if, due to coming into contact with other factors, the self becomes an object possessor that knows things, then it has basically changed from the earlier self – that is, the self prior to coming into contact with other factors.

We can see the meticulous logic that the **Madhyamika** uses here to refute the **Particularists'** assertions. We should study these methods of logic, basically refuting and making counter arguments to the earlier positions and so forth. Such logic is meticulous. It is good for us to relate to this as a way of enhancing our own reasoning and logic.

Because people resort to arguments in many situations, one may as well learn the skills to present a logical argument. Especially when two people live together it seems that they end up having many arguments, so perhaps it's good to know how to carry out the arguments well, using logic. If you have previously learned how to use logic, you might even win an argument with your partner! (*laughter*)

The next verse is:

69. *If there is nothing that becomes the self,  
How does the mind affect it?  
Thus, devoid of consciousness and action,  
Space has been made the self.*

The commentary explains:

If one accepts that the self does not even have the slightest change, then how does the mind affect the self so that the self knows objects? It follows the self is not affected – because it is accepted that the self is not changeable.

After this the commentary presents a summary:

*Summary*: Because the self is accepted as lacking consciousness and action, one has effectively accepted space to be self, which makes it pointless to accept - as such a self cannot act in any beneficial or harmful manner.

When the commentary states *if one accepts that the self does not even have the slightest change ...*, it is referring to the assertion of the **Particularists** that the self is permanent. So they are effectively accepting that the self does not have the slightest change. The contradiction presented here by the **Madhyamika** is, how then does the mind affect the self so that the self knows objects? The **Particularists** assert that, while the self is matter, it is when it comes into contact with a consciousness that it knows objects. The **Madhyamikas** are asking, how is it possible for that change to occur if the self is permanent? How can the self later become an object possessor, when in fact you accept the self to be unchangeable?

The **Madhyamikas'** reasoning is then presented further: *... it follows the self is not affected, because it is accepted that the self is not changeable*. Thus, the contradiction of the **Particularists'** assertion is presented.

From the **Prasangika Madhyamika** point of view – which we would claim is the point of view we adhere to – in relation to the self as knowing objects, although we would not say that the self is consciousness, we can still infer that the person knows things. Even from the normal conventional point of view, we would say that a person knows things, and that is because a person possesses a mind.

Some lower schools assert the self as being consciousness, but from the **Prasangika Madhyamika** point of view, the self is neither consciousness nor matter. While the self itself is not consciousness, it doesn't contradict that the self knows things. This is a significant point that we need to understand.

The summary of the **Madhyamika** argument is quite clear. It says that *because the self is accepted as lacking consciousness and action*, the **Particularists** have *effectively accepted space to be self*. If a self can be posited as lacking consciousness and not doing any action, that basically fits the criteria of empty space. So, you could effectively say that space is the self.

If that were the case, it is *pointless to accept such a self because it cannot act in any beneficial or harmful manner*. What the **Madhyamikas** are pointing out here is the contradiction that, if you were to posit a self that does not have any benefit or harm whatsoever, what is the point of even being a self? How can such a self even exist?

### 2.3.1.3. REFUTING OBJECTIONS TO THE REFUTATION

These are subdivided into two:

2.3.1.3.1. Refuting the objection that karmic cause and effect become invalid

2.3.1.3.2 Refuting the objection that meditation on compassion becomes invalid

With these particular non-Buddhist schools, we can see that they do believe in karma, because the objections they present here are that: "According to you Prasangika Madhyamikas, karmic cause and effect becomes invalid". This indicates that these schools do adhere to the notion of karmic cause and effect, as well as meditation on compassion, and so they value the need to meditate on compassion.

*2.3.1.3.1. Refuting the objection that karmic cause and effect become invalid*

This is divided into two:

2.3.1.3.1.1. Objection

2.3.1.3.1.2. Answer

#### 2.3.1.3.1.1. Objection

The verse reads:

70. *If it is said, 'In case the self does not exist,  
Then karmic cause and effect relationships are  
invalid.  
If one disintegrates upon creating karma,  
Whose karma does it become?'*

From the commentary:

*Argument:* If the non-existence of the self, which becomes the basis for all bondage and liberation, is taken as momentary generation and disintegration of all functionalities, then virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and the relation to their results are invalid. If the person disintegrates in the next moment upon having created virtuous or non-virtuous karma, then whose karmic creation does it subsequently become? At the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma does not exist. If you say however according to our view the person is permanent [...].<sup>1</sup>

Here the non-Buddhist **Particularist** schools are presenting a meticulously argued objection to the Prasangika Madhyamika. They say that the self in their system is a permanent self and begin their objection by saying, *if the non-existence of the self, which becomes or is the basis for all bondage and liberation ...* Here we can see that they have a concept of bondage and liberation, just as we have in the Buddhist system. Indeed, the Particularists assert that the self or person is the basis of bondage to cyclic existence, or being in samsara, and so becoming liberated is actually dependent on the self. So in that sense, the self is the basis of liberation.

The **Particularists'** objection to the Prasangika point of view continues: *... then virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and the relation to their results are invalid. If the person disintegrates in the next moment upon having created virtuous or non-virtuous karma, then whose karmic creation does it subsequently become? At the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma does not exist.*

In other words, if you, the Prasangika, say that the self doesn't exist, then who is it that actually creates the karma?

It is undeniable that the consequence of a karmic effect is experienced by the same person who created it. However,

the Particularists argue that, because the person who creates the karma is the one who experiences the effect later, this invalidates the Prasangika view, which asserts a self as being impermanent. If the self were impermanent and disintegrated from moment to moment, say the Particularists, who is the person experiencing the karmic effects created earlier?

We need to understand that, from the point of view of the Prasangika system and indeed all Buddhist schools, after the first moment in which a person creates karma, in the next moment that earlier moment will have disintegrated. The next moment after the karma is created, the action of the karma has ceased or disintegrated, but what does remain is the seed or imprint of the karma created earlier. The imprint is thus left on the continuum of the person's consciousness. As the continuum is carried forward, and when that seed later matures, one experiences the result of the karma.

Therefore, we need to understand that the reason why the Particularists feel they must assert the person as permanent is because, according to them, if the person were impermanent then, when the person who creates the karma disintegrates, that person will not experience the effects of the karma that was created earlier. Because to them it is the same person, and that is why they feel there is no alternative other than to accept the person as permanent.

#### 2.3.1.3.1.2. Answer

The first verse and a half is presented first:

71. *The bases of action and result are different,  
And although the creator self does not exist,  
Since this is the same for both of us,  
Isn't this debate here pointless?*

72ab. *It is impossible to see what you say,  
That the cause is endowed with the result.*

The commentary explains:

Since it is established for both of us that the persons who are the basis at the causal time of creating the action, and at the resultant time of experiencing the result are of different substance, and that at the time of experiencing the result the self who created the karma does not exist, isn't your debate here at this time of explaining the relationship between karmic cause and effect pointless? You also accept that at the causal time of creating the karma the experience of the result is not there, and that at the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma is not there. If this becomes a fault, then it also applies to you. Additionally, your observation that the one endowed with the cause at the time of creating the cause is endowed with the experience of the result, this observation is impossible.

In presenting the answer here, the Madhyamikas say: *since it is established for both of us that the persons who are the basis at the causal time of creating the action, and at the resultant time of experiencing the result are of different substance ...* In other words, they would also assert that the person that experienced the result of the karma is different to the one who created it, in so far that they are of different substances.

The Madhyamikas continue: *... and that at the time of experiencing the result the self who created the karma does not exist, isn't your debate here at this time of explaining the relationship between karmic cause and effect pointless? You also accept that at the causal time of creating the karma the experience of the result is not there, and that at the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma is not there. If this becomes a fault,*

<sup>1</sup> Note: the [...] denotes the commentary's continuity with verses 71–74, the answers to the Particularists' argument

then it also applies to you. Additionally, your observation that the one endowed with the cause at the time of creating the cause is endowed with the experience of the result, this observation is impossible.

The **Particularists** then ask the question of the Prasangika Madhyamika:

*Particularists:* How is it then in your school?

Basically, they are asking, how do you assert the person that experiences both karmic cause and result?

The next two lines from the verse are:

*72cd. In dependence on one continuum,  
We refer to agent and engager.*

The **Madhyamika** response is:

*Madhyamika:* In dependence on one continuum of aggregates we refer to the agent who creates the karma and the engager of the result. That called a continuum is the taker, which possesses parts, possessing that taken, the parts of the earlier, intermediate and later moments. In brief, it is valid to say this person creates karma, as well as experiences karma, but nobody can posit a cause and effect to be simultaneous.

As presented here, the **Madhyamika** school is saying that, *in dependence on one continuum of aggregates we refer to the agent who creates the karma and the engager of the result*. The continuum particularly refers to the continuum of the consciousness that goes from one life to the next. Within the aggregates, it is basically the consciousness that continues from one life to the next. Therefore, the creator of karma in this life is said to be the continuum of the same consciousness in the next life that experiences the result. That is how we posit a person who experiences the karmic consequences – a continuum of consciousness.

What is presented next is quite clear: *That called a continuum is the taker, which possesses parts, possessing that taken, the parts of the earlier, intermediate and later moments*. Here, the **Madhyamika** is positing the continuum as that which includes the earlier parts, the middle parts, and the later parts. That which possesses all of these is what they call a continuum.

The commentary continues, *in brief, it is valid to say this person creates karma, as well as experiences karma*. Here, *it is valid* means that, based on the continuum of the person, it is tenable or valid to posit that it is the same person who creates the karma, and also experiences the results or consequences of the karma. The Madhyamikas continue, *but nobody can posit a cause and effect to be simultaneous*. What is being emphasised here is that while the Madhyamikas assert that it is the continuum of a consciousness that experiences the effects of karma, the creation of karma and the resultant experience cannot be at the same time, as it is not possible for a cause and effect to be simultaneous.

It is important for us to get a good understanding of this point, because often we think that we experience an immediate effect, simultaneous with an action, and that whatever we do brings an immediate result.

The remaining two verses are presented are:

*73. The past and future minds  
Are not the self because they do not exist.  
Then, if the generated mind is the self  
Because it disintegrates, again there is no self.*

*74. For example, like the banana tree,  
When taken apart nothing is there.*

*Similarly, when looking with analysis  
Also the self is not absolute.*

The commentary then presents the meaning:

The past and future minds are not the self or exist as self because they disintegrate and do not generate and therefore do not exist as self. Then, if the generated present mind were the self, as it disintegrates in the next moment, again the self asserted by you does not exist. For example, when the banana tree is separated into its parts, there is nothing there that exists inherently. Likewise, if one searches with logical analysis whether something is established inherently or not, then also the self does not exist in an absolute manner, because such a self is harmed by the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of a person that is explained below.

What the **Madhyamika** is presenting here is again quite clear: *the past and future minds are not the self or exist as self because they disintegrate and do not generate and therefore do not exist as self*. We can all accept that, if something happened in the past, then the very fact that it happened previously means that it doesn't exist right now. And the very fact that something is yet to come in the future, means that it doesn't exist now, so therefore it cannot exist inherently and permanently.

Having refuted the Particularists' assertion of the past mind as being a self and the future mind as being a self, the Madhyamika continue that, *if the generated present mind were the self...* – that is, if you were to assert the present mind is the self, then that also is invalid. The commentary explains, *if the generated present mind were the self, as it disintegrates in the next moment, again the self asserted by you does not exist*. So the mind of the past has been refuted as being the self, the mind to be generated in the future is refuted as the self, and even the present mind is also refuted as the self.

If you were to investigate in this way, you will not find an inherently existent self. Here, the Madhyamikas present the example of a banana tree, which is made up of different layers. If you were to peel off each layer to try to find the essence of the banana tree, you would actually discover that there is no such real, solid core to be found. Using that as an example, the commentary says that likewise, when one searches using logical analysis to find whether something is established inherently or not, the self, too, does not exist in the same way. If you were to investigate and analyse whether an inherently existent self exists, you could not possibly find such a self.

The commentary also mentions here that, *because such a self is harmed by the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of a person that is explained below*. In other words, when the logical reasoning of selflessness is presented, that will establish that there is no such inherently existent self.

**2.3.1.3.2 Refuting the objection that meditation on compassion becomes invalid**

*75. If it is said, 'If there is no sentient being,*

The **Realists** first present their objection:

*Realist:* If there is absolutely no inherently existing person, then, as there is no focal object for compassion, for whom should one practise meditation on compassion?

The Madhyamika answers:

*Madhyamika*: Although there is no inherently existing person, it follows there is no such fault that the focal object of compassion is non-existent – because that nominally existing sentient being, labelled by mental confusion, which is accepted for the purpose of achieving the result of liberation, is valid to be the focal object of compassion.

If one relates the ‘labelled by mental confusion’ to the true-grasping at person and phenomena then, since they label the person as truly existent and one refutes that it exists the way it is labelled, the sentient being is not refuted. By having refuted this, the sentient being is established as existing only in mere name, as an imputed existent.

Further, if one relates the mental confusion merely to ignorance, then the sentient being that becomes labelled by it exists as the focal object of compassion.

Here, where it says that *if there is absolutely no inherently existing person*, this objection will not relate to the lower Buddhist schools – the Vaibhashika, the Sautrantika, the Cittamatra or Mind Only, and the Svatantrika Madhyamika Middle Way school. All of these accept an inherently existent person.

The **Realists’** objection to the Prasangika’s earlier argument is that, *if there is absolutely no inherently existing person, then, as there is no focal object for compassion, for whom should one practise meditation on compassion?* This implies that for them, if a person does not exist inherently, then a person could not possibly exist at all. They’re arguing that if, according to the Prasangika Madhyamika, a person doesn’t exist, then who is the object of compassion?

The **Madhyamikas** say, *although there is no inherently existing person, it follows there is no such fault that the focal object of compassion is non-existent*. The reasoning follows, *because that nominally existing sentient being, labelled by mental confusion, which is accepted for the purpose of achieving the result of liberation, is valid to be the focal object of compassion*.

The explanation here is that, when mental confusion or ignorance labels the person as being truly or inherently existent, that is what is called the misconception of true grasping at the person, or grasping at an inherently existent person. When phenomena are apprehended as truly or inherently existent, that is labelled as true grasping at phenomena. That is how the apprehension of grasping at an inherently existent person or phenomena comes about.

As the person and phenomena are labelled wrongly by mental confusion in this way, when the inherently existent person is eliminated, the person itself isn’t eliminated – the nominally existent person remains.

The commentary continues, *since they label*, meaning the mental confusion labelling the person as truly existent, *one refutes that it exists in the way that it is labelled* by the mental confusion. When that inherent existence is refuted, the sentient being is however not eliminated.

How, then, is a sentient being labelled? Having refuted the truly or inherently existent person, *the sentient being is established as existing only in mere name, as an imputed existent*. This is according to the **Prasangika**. In other words, the person is what is referred to as an ‘imputed existent’, meaning it exists merely by label, or by imputation. It does not exist from its own side, but is merely labelled; it exists by mere name, or imputation.

So, the person is merely labelled upon the basis of imputation, which is the aggregates, and thus exists and functions based on that imputation or label on the aggregates. That is how it exists – not existing from the side of the aggregates, but as a label on the aggregates. That is why a person is referred to as an imputed existence.

The next verse reads:

76. *Without sentient beings whose result is it?  
True, but even though, it is posited from mental  
confusion.  
For the purpose of pacifying suffering  
Do not stop the resultant mental confusion.*

The commentary explains:

*Realists*: If there is no sentient being then, because the meditation on compassion loses its result, the buddha resulting from the meditation on compassion is the attainment of which person?

*Madhyamika*: Although it is true that these causes and effects do not exist truly, it is not contradictory to meditate on compassion that arises from nominal confusion about phenomena.

For the purpose of pacifying the sufferings of sentient beings one should not stop the non-afflictive mental confusion at the time of the subsequent attainment of having attained the resultant buddha. One cannot stop it adventitiously, and although one does not stop it, if one relates this branch of the method for attaining complete enlightenment to the delusion regarding suchness, then it is a delusion of true existence.

One can relate it to the compassion of merely focusing on sentient beings that have not been characterised as lacking true existence, and to the compassion focusing on phenomena, being explained as becoming the cause of enlightenment.

Otherwise the meaning<sup>2</sup> is that nominalities such as the focusing on only mind by those not realising suchness is not something to be abandoned.

The **Realists’** objection here is, *if there is no sentient being ...*, which, of course, is not what the Prasangika is saying at all. The **Prasangika** say that there is no inherently existent sentient being, but they do not take that as being the non-existence of sentient beings. The **Realists**, however, object that, *because the meditation on compassion loses its result, the buddha resulting from the meditation on compassion is the attainment of which person?* This is a rhetorical question.

The **Madhyamikas** present their answer by saying that *although it is true that these causes and effects do not exist truly, it is not contradictory to meditate on compassion that arises from nominal confusion about phenomena*. Further, *for the purpose of pacifying the sufferings of sentient beings one should not stop the non-afflictive mental confusion at the time of the subsequent attainment of having attained the resultant buddha*.

These are actually very meticulous explanations. If we pay attention to this, it actually relates to our situation, so it is a significant point to understand. While one has not yet completely overcome the misapprehension, or misconception of true existence, by merely focusing on sentient beings, one can still generate compassion. This is the point.

As it mentioned here, *one cannot stop it adventitiously, and although one does not stop it, if one relates this branch of the method for attaining complete enlightenment to the delusion regarding*

<sup>2</sup> ... of the third and fourth line of verse 76 is ...

suchness, then it is a delusion of true existence. While one has not yet overcome the misconception of grasping at true existence or inherent existence, it is still necessary to develop compassion towards sentient beings. There are three levels of generating compassion: one merely focuses on sentient beings; the next focuses on sentient beings seeing them with the characteristic of being impermanent; and the third focuses on sentient beings seeing them with the characteristic of being empty of inherent existence, i.e. lacking a truly or inherently existent self.

The commentary explains, *one can relate it to the compassion of merely focusing on sentient beings that have not been characterised as lacking true existence, and to the compassion focusing on phenomena, being explained as becoming the cause of enlightenment.* The compassion focusing on phenomena is that which sees sentient beings with the characteristic of them being impermanent.

So, while one has not yet overcome the misapprehension of grasping at truly existent or inherently existent sentient beings, one can still generate compassion for sentient beings by focusing on them merely as sentient beings, or focusing on them as impermanent phenomena.

The commentary further says, *otherwise the meaning is that nominalities such as the focusing on only mind by those not realising suchness is not something to be abandoned.*

The next verse is:

77. *Pride is the cause of suffering,  
Which increases due to delusion regarding the  
self.  
If, 'This cannot be reversed,'  
The meditation on selflessness is superior.*

*Realist:* Why was the mental confusion including the object refuted earlier?

*Madhyamika:* As was shown earlier in the statement, 'It becomes the cause for cyclic existence', the pride that becomes the cause for cyclic existence, i.e. afflictive ignorance, fabricated the self, and the sufferings of cyclic existence increase. There is no contradiction that the pride needs to be stopped, and can be stopped.

The next argument is:

*Argument:* There is no stopping of true-grasping aside from stopping this kind of mental confusion, and it cannot be stopped. Although one stops it once, because it arises again, similar to the circling aggregates, it cannot be eliminated completely.

*Madhyamika:* It is not impossible to abandon true-grasping. It is distorted with regard to the mode of abiding of functionalities, and hence it is very weak and inferior, and the meditation on selflessness is superior compared to it. Because it realises the mode of abiding of functionalities faultlessly, the other can be eliminated from the root.

So, the **Realists** ask, *why was the mental confusion including the object refuted earlier?* And the **Madhyamikas** reply by saying, *as was shown earlier in the statement, because 'It becomes the cause for cyclic existence', the pride that becomes the cause for cyclic existence, i.e. afflictive ignorance fabricates the existence of the self, and thus the sufferings of cyclic existence increase. There is no contradiction as this pride needs to be stopped, and can be stopped.*

After the **Madhyamikas** explain why mental confusion including the object was refuted earlier, the **non-Buddhist Realists** present the next argument that, *there is no stopping of true-grasping aside from stopping this kind of mental confusion, and it cannot be stopped. Although one stops it once, because it*

*arises again, similar to the circling aggregates, it cannot be eliminated completely, so this is their argument.*

The **Madhyamikas** answer, *it is not impossible to abandon true-grasping, and the reason follows: It is distorted with regards to the mode of abiding of functionalities, and hence it is very weak and inferior, and the meditation on selflessness is superior compared to it.*

I've presented this reasoning in more detail in previous teachings. For those of you who can recall them and can refer to the teachings, it will be quite clear.

As the **Madhyamikas** concisely mention here, *it is distorted with regard to the mode of abiding of functionalities.* So, true-grasping is distorted in relation to the actual mode of things, of functionalities, because it is based on falsity and distortion, *hence it is very weak and inferior. The meditation on selflessness is superior compared to it.* Thus, because the meditation on selflessness is superior, it has the ability to completely destroy true-grasping. The commentary concludes, *because it realises the mode of abiding of functionalities faultlessly, the other can be eliminated from the root.*

### 2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of phenomena

We can leave that for our next session.

It is good to read the text slowly, and then revisit it again. Based on the teachings we've received, we can actually get a good understanding. When we refer to one text and get a good understanding of that, one can relate to other texts. That will also help us to get good understanding.

When we begin to understand and grasp the meaning of the texts we read, we will then begin to really enjoy the text. We will reach a point where we don't want to put the text down, but continue reading it. Without a textbook around, one would feel lonely!

Not only will we be able to derive the meaning while reading the text, even after we put the textbook down, we will still be thinking about certain points, reflecting on the meaning and getting more understanding and insight from the passages we have read.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

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