
Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

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

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19 April 2005

As usual please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice'.

2.1.2.3. REFUTING THE CONSEQUENCE THAT THE MIDDLE WAY HAS NO POWER (CONT.)

2.1.2.3.1. *The debate*

We were at the outline where the **Mind Only** argue that (1) the realisation of emptiness does not have any purpose; or (2) if the purpose is to abandon the afflictions, then the realisation of emptiness does not have that power. Their reason for the second argument is that even though the magician is aware that the illusory woman he created is only a mere illusion, he still generates attachment for that illusion. Therefore, they say, realising that all phenomena are illusory-like in that they lack true existence does not have the power to overcome mental afflictions.

2.1.2.3.2. *Rebutting the debate*

2.1.2.3.2.1. The reason why the magician still generates attachment

2.1.2.3.2.2. Showing that the wisdom realising emptiness can abandon the afflictions is valid

2.1.2.3.2.3. Showing that perfect abandonment will arise

2.1.2.3.2.1. The reason why the magician still generates attachment

The creator has not abandoned the afflictive imprints [31]

Regarding this object of knowledge.

When seeing it

The imprints of emptiness are weak.

The *creator* refers to the magician, the creator of the illusion. He *has not abandoned the afflictive imprints* of true-grasping *regarding this object of knowledge*, the illusion, and *when* he sees the illusion, *the imprints of emptiness are weak*, so he can not counteract the true appearance of the object, and that is why he still generates attachment for the object.

In a literal sense *afflictive imprint* includes the seeds of the afflictions as well as the mere imprints, and in a figurative sense it can also include the afflictions themselves. The afflictions and their seeds are *afflictive obscurations* and the mere imprints are *obscurations to knowledge*. Here it is referring to the affliction of true-grasping and the seeds of true-grasping.

The *imprints of emptiness* refer to the wisdom realising emptiness, and the last line is saying that the magician's realisation of emptiness is weak. **Shantideva** is saying that just realising emptiness in itself will not overcome the mental afflictions, but that one needs to meditate on it

and reach a certain level on the path to abandon the afflictions.

For example, on the path of accumulation and preparation bodhisattvas do have the realisation of emptiness, and on the path of preparation they have the union of calm abiding and special insight realising emptiness. But they still have not overcome the mental afflictions. Even on the path of seeing, when bodhisattvas realise emptiness directly, they only overcome the intellectually-acquired mental afflictions. The innate mental afflictions are abandoned sequentially on the succeeding levels of the path of meditation, and are abandoned completely on the eighth ground.

There are many distorted perceptions that are very easy to overcome, such as the distorted eye-consciousness to which falling hairs appear. Here all one needs is a valid eye-consciousness that sees that there are no falling hairs.

But to overcome true-grasping, which has been in one's mental continuum since beginningless times, one needs to meditate on the object of emptiness for a long time. It is not enough to just realise the non-existence of the apprehended object, but one needs to actually meditate on the absence of the apprehended object for a very long time. As we have just said, not even the direct realisation of emptiness will overcome the mental afflictions. One needs to have progressed along the path of meditation. Here in the Prasangika system it is only when one has reached the eighth ground that mental afflictions have been overcome. That is the point that is being made here. Overcoming true-grasping is not like overcoming some other everyday misconception; it takes considerable amount of meditation.

2.1.2.3.2.2. Showing that it is valid to say that the wisdom realising emptiness can abandon the afflictions

2.1.2.3.2.2.1. In general

2.1.2.3.2.2.2. In particular

2.1.2.3.2.1.1. In general

Meditating on the imprints of emptiness [32]

Abandons the imprints of phenomena;

The statement that they are totally non-existent

Means that subsequently even that is abandoned through meditation.

By meditating on the wisdom that realises the emptiness of all phenomena one can abandon the imprints of true-grasping.

'Meditating on the imprints of emptiness abandons the imprints of phenomena' means that by meditating on the wisdom that realises the emptiness of all phenomena one abandons the true-grasping that holds all phenomena to be truly existent. These two lines refer to realising the emptiness of conventional phenomena.

Subsequently, even the true-grasping at emptiness itself is abandoned. One realises that even the emptiness of all phenomena lacks true existence, and in such a way one can counteract the true-grasping that holds the suchness of conventional phenomena to exist truly.

If one takes a vase as example, we have the object of vase, and the true-grasping that grasps at vase as truly existent. Then we have the emptiness of the vase and the true-grasping that holds the emptiness of the vase to be truly

existent. By meditating on the absence of the truly existent vase one can counteract the true-grasping that grasps at the vase as truly existent. Meditating on the emptiness of the vase overcomes the grasping at the truly existent vase. Then, by meditating on the lack of true existence of the emptiness of the vase, one overcomes the grasping at the vase's emptiness as truly existent.

2.1.2.3.2.2. In particular

When it is said that nothing exists [33]
The investigated object is not observed
At that time the non-object lacks a basis.
How can it linger before one's awareness?

'When it says that nothing exists' indicates the point in time when there is the realisation that neither the object, i.e. the conventional basis, nor the non-object, i.e. its emptiness, are truly existent. When there is no truly existent object at all the investigated object is not observed. At that time no true existence appears to the mind at all, and one has arrived at a lack of true existence. The non-object is the emptiness of the object. When one realises that the conventional object as well as its suchness, the non-object, lack true existence, then the investigated object is not observed.

Both the conventional basis as well as its suchness lack true existence. Since the suchness is of one nature with its conventional basis then it has to lack true existence, as the basis lacks true existence. If one of them lacks true existence then the other one naturally has to lack true existence. Therefore how could it continue to linger as truly existent before one's awareness?

When objects and non-objects [34]
Do not linger before one's awareness
And since there is no other possibility
The focus is totally pacified in non-existence.

When both conventional *objects* as well as their ultimate nature, the *non-object* of suchness, *do not linger* as truly existent *before one's awareness*, then, *since there is no other possibility* for the appearance of true existence, or for the actual existence of true existence, *the focus* of true existence *is totally pacified* within the *non-existence* of true existence.

The third line, 'since there is no other possibility', is based on the logical conclusion that if there are only two modes in which something could exist truly, and if one has refuted both those modes, then logically true existence has been totally refuted. This is because one has refuted the two existing possibilities, and there is no third possibility. Therefore the conceptual thought holding the object of true-grasping to be real is totally pacified within non-true existence.

One can relate this to the resultant stage of the Dharmakaya, which is the stage where one has totally pacified the dualistic appearances within emptiness. Once one has reached this state, where not only the mental afflictions and their seeds, but all dualistic appearances, have been totally pacified, then one has reached the Dharmakaya. Before that, on the level of sentient beings, the non-dual transcendental wisdom has also totally pacified dualistic appearances.

2.1.2.3.2.3. Showing that perfect abandonment will arise

This leads to the following argument, 'How could someone who has pacified all motivational thought benefit others?'

Placing one's hopes in [35]

The wish-fulfilling golden jewel

Likewise, to the disciples through the power of prayer

The body of the conqueror appears

After having made offerings to the garuda [36]

Then even if it takes a long time

The poisons and so forth will be pacified

If one makes offerings to the conquerors in accordance with the practices of enlightenment

Bodhisattvas will go beyond sorrow [37]

And will achieve all purposes.

How can one achieve a result by making offerings to something that lacks a mind?

It is explained that it is similar with Nirvana.

The answer is that the wish-fulfilling tree, for example, also does not possess any motivational thought, yet sentient beings are still able to achieve their worldly wishes by praying to that wish-fulfilling tree.

Similarly, buddhas benefit sentient beings despite having no motivational thought. This comes about because of the conditions from the sides of the buddhas, and because of the conditions from the side of the disciples. With the motivation of wanting to benefit sentient beings they engaged in accumulating merits for three countless great eons. Throughout their whole bodhisattva practice, which they did solely for the benefit of sentient beings, they prayed for many aeons to benefit sentient beings, and dedicated their merits to that purpose. Their many different prayers included, 'May sentient beings be purified even just by hearing my name and so forth'. Therefore, once they reach the resultant stage they don't need any further prompting to help sentient beings. It comes naturally, without having to think about it.

From the disciples' side, merits are needed to benefit from the buddhas. Through the coming together of these causes and conditions then the disciples benefit from the buddhas, despite there not being any conceptual effort from the buddhas' side.

The buddhas benefit the sentient beings in a great variety of ways, such as through the supreme emanation body, which is perceived by all disciples. Whether or not they perceive the supreme emanation body does not depend on the purity of the karma of the disciples.

Then there is also the enjoyment body, which has completed all the activities of the Mahayana path, that primarily benefits superior bodhisattvas. The enjoyment body enjoys the completion of the Mahayana path benefiting superior bodhisattvas. The benefit comes about through the conditions from the buddhas' side as well as from one's own side. That is why one needs to make prayers that in the future one will meet with spiritual teachers who are manifestations of the Buddha. If one has a teacher who is not a perfect emanation body, if that teacher is in the aspect of an ordinary monk, then one should still think of one's teacher as being an actual emanation body of the Buddha.

Through the kindness of the Buddha one knows about all the different practices, such as how to progress along the path, how to accumulate merits, how to meditate and so forth. Through that the different mahasiddhas, realised masters and so forth, came about.

The example of the garuda we can discuss next time. In brief the objection is made that actually the prayers that a buddha did while practising the bodhisattva path should not be really all that effective, because they were made quite a long time ago. One point to consider here is the importance of bodhisattvas. Where do buddhas come from? Buddhas arise from bodhisattvas: they followed the bodhisattva path and then arose as buddhas.

Next week is discussion group. It is important to understand the process of the questions, and the answers, such as from which point of view the questions are posed, and then how the answers are given.

Review

With regard to the Mind Only if it exists is there the pervasion that it exists truly?

Student: No, conceptual creations don't exist truly.

For what reason?

Student: They are dependent on the mind positing things, on imputation.

Last time we talked about the common and the uncommon mode of abiding. Since they don't exist out of the uncommon mode of abiding, but exist in a mode common to the apprehension by, and appearance to, conceptual thought, then they don't exist truly.

In the Mind Only system is the vase conventional truth or ultimate truth?

Student: Conventional truth.

Why? What is the mode of it being conventional or illusory truth? One can say because it is a phenomenon that is false since it doesn't exist the way it appears.

What is the definition of illusory conventional truth and ultimate truth in the Mind Only system?

The meaning of **ultimate truth is the ultimate object of a pure path that has meditated on it. Conventional truth is that which is not the object of ultimate path having meditated on it.** What are the three characteristics that are posited in the Mind Only system?

Student: Other-powered phenomena and conceptual creations.

There is one object left, about which we talked about for quite a long time.

Student: Thoroughly established phenomena.

What is the definition of consciousness?

Student: Clear and knowing.

Are you sure?

Student: Yes.

Take the subject 'superior buddha' - it follows that he is clear knowing?

Student: Why?

It follows that the superior buddha is not clear knowing?

Student: Yes.

The Buddha knows everything but he is not a knower, and the Buddha is conscious of everything but is not consciousness.

What is the meaning of consciousness?

Student: It arises in the aspect of the object.

How many consciousnesses are there?

Student: Six.

Show.

Student: Eye, ear nose, tongue, body and mind.

The question was what types of consciousnesses are there, not the types of primary consciousness, of which there are six. You could posit divisions like valid cognition and consciousnesses that are not valid cognitions, and minds and mental factors. Then mind has the division into six primary consciousnesses and 51 mental factors.

Student: I want to ask a question about the realisation of the emptiness of the emptiness that we discussed tonight - the specifics of the meditation on that topic. If at that time there exists a direct cognition of emptiness, the moment of realisation would be subsequent. I'm just wondering how one goes back to meditate on the emptiness of emptiness? How does one generate that realisation?

If you have realised emptiness directly then you have already realised the emptiness of emptiness. The subsequent doesn't apply to subsequent direct realisations. There are many different inferential cognisers of emptiness, which we have already talked about. The inferential cogniser realises the emptiness of one, and then of the other and so forth. We have explained before how inferential cognisers first realise the emptiness of one, and then transfer that realisation to others.

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Edited Version

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