
Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

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As usual we should begin with a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. In order to do so I am going to listen to this profound teaching and put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.1.3.2.4.2. For those wishing for liberation it is suitable to meditate on emptiness

*Emptiness is the antidote against the darkness [54]
Of afflictive and omniscience obscurations.
How can those wishing for quick omniscience
Not meditate on it?*

Afflictive obscurations are the afflictions such as ignorance, attachment and anger, and their seeds.

Obscurations to omniscience have a two-fold division into seed and manifest obscurations. The seed part is the imprints of the affliction that have the power to produce dualistic appearances in the mind, while manifest obscurations to omniscience are the actual dualistic appearance to the mind. Until one has abandoned true grasping, one's mind will be obscured by dualistic appearances.

The wisdom realising *emptiness is the antidote to the darkness of the afflictive and omniscience obscurations*. Therefore *how could those wishing to attain quick liberation and omniscience not meditate on it?*

The **hearer** follower replies, 'Well I don't really feel like meditating on emptiness because it makes me afraid'. They can be forgiven for that argument, because if one does not know how to meditate on emptiness properly then one falls into the extreme of nihilism, where everything becomes non-existent.

The **Madhyamaka** reply,

*If one generates fear [55]
Of the phenomena generating suffering
Then why generate fear of emptiness,
Which pacifies suffering.*

This is a slight rebuke saying, 'Well actually the real danger is generated by truly existent phenomena'. By this they mean that by grasping at phenomena as truly existent one generates all the different sufferings that one is right to fear, but that there is really no reason to be afraid of emptiness, which in fact pacifies suffering.

Emptiness is not really a phenomenon to be afraid of, because it pacifies all fears and dangers, while true-grasping, which is the root of cyclic existence, should be the actual object of one's fear.

*If one becomes afraid of anything [56]
Should some selves exist,
Since there is no nature at all
Who is the one afraid?*

One generates fear if, at the time of analysis, one finds that some selves do exist from their own side. No-one is afraid if at the time of analysis no self nature is found at all. But if there is a strong perception of the person existing

independently from its own side, one experiences fear at the time of analysis.

2.2. Practising it through meditation

2.2.1. Establishing the selflessness of person through reason

2.2.2. Establishing the selflessness of phenomena through reason

Different in basis

The self that is being negated in the term 'selflessness' is the self that exists out of its own nature, independently, from its own side. This is the self that is referred to in *Introduction to the Middle Way* where it says, 'Since all our faults of delusions and so forth arise from the view of the transitory collections, yogis abandon the self'. This is the self to be negated. Grasping at that self constitutes self-grasping. Without realising the absence of such a self it is impossible to counteract self-grasping.

If this type of self existence is negated on the person it is the selflessness of person, and if it is negated on phenomena it is the selflessness of phenomena. That is why there is no difference in the subtlety of the two selflessness. They only differ from the point of view of the basis of negation, and not from the point of view of the object of negation.

In *Introduction to the Middle Way* the selflessness of phenomena was explained before the selflessness of person, which is in accordance with the sequence of generation of the two types of self-grasping. Here the selflessness of person is explained before the selflessness of phenomena in accordance with the sequence in which the two selflessness are realised.

Innate and intellectually acquired

There is also the two fold division of self-grasping into innate self-grasping and intellectually acquired self-grasping. *Innate self-grasping* is the self-grasping that arises naturally in one's mind. *Intellectually acquired self-grasping* is the true grasping that is generated through thinking about reasons. On investigating the nature of phenomena some individuals arrive at the conclusion that phenomena exist truly, which is an intellectually acquired true grasping. Others, of higher intelligence, arrive at the conclusion that phenomena lack true existence.

Intellectually acquired true grasping is a true grasping that is generated in dependence on reason, i.e. having some reason for thinking that phenomena exist truly. It only exists in the continuum of tenet holders, and therefore is not regarded as the root of cyclic existence. Innate true grasping is true grasping that arises naturally in the mind. Only innate true grasping is the root of cyclic existence.

2.2.1. Establishing the selflessness of person through reason

2.2.1.1. The way of refuting the object of innate true grasping

2.2.1.2. The way of refuting the object of the intellectually acquired true grasping

2.2.1.1. THE WAY OF REFUTING THE OBJECT OF INNATE TRUE GRASPING

If the self is found in the basis of imputation then it has to exist either in the body or the mind. The body as a whole or some part of it, or the mind as a whole or some part of it, has to be the self, and that is what is being refuted through this analysis.

The significance is that not only does the object that is imputed not exist inherently, but the basis of imputation also does not exist inherently. This second point is usually more

difficult to understand. How one has to approach this is that the basis of imputation does not exist inherently, because it is not found at the time of analysis. If one approaches it in this way, thinking that the basis of imputation does not exist inherently because it is not found at the time of analysis, then it will become clearer. If one says straight away that the basis of imputation simply does not exist truly, then it is more difficult, because one would still feel that the object is existing from its own side.

The self is merely labelled in dependence on the aggregates. If the object of the thought thinking, 'I', which is present most of the time, is really existent within the basis of imputation then it has to exist either in the body or in the mind. Either the body as a whole, or some part of the body has to be the 'I', or the mind as a whole, or some part of the mind, has to be the 'I'. Sequentially refuting that they are not establishes that the 'I' is not findable at the time of analysis. This means that the 'I' does not exist intrinsically within the body or mind. That leaves only the possibility that the 'I' is merely labelled in dependence on the body and mind, which is the 'I' that actually exists. The focal object of the mere 'I'-grasping is the mere 'I' that exists as merely labelled in dependence on the body and the mind.

*The teeth, hair and nail are not the self; [57]
The self is not the bones or blood,
Not the nasal mucus or phlegm,
And also not lymph or pus.*

*The self is not the fat or sweat, [58]
And neither the lungs nor liver are the self.
The other inner organs are also not the self,
The self was not urinated to the outside.*

The teeth, hair and nails are not the self. That we know. Neither are the *bones* and *blood* an example for the self. *Nasal mucus* and *phlegm* are not the self, and neither is *lymphatic* liquid or *pus*. None of these parts of the body are the self, which is merely labelled in dependence on those parts.

Neither *fat* nor *sweat* are examples of the self, because the self is merely labelled in dependence on those. *Neither the lungs nor the liver are the self*, nor are *other inner organs*, such as the intestines and so forth, the self, because the self is merely imputed in dependence on these body parts. The emphasis here is that the self is merely imputed in dependence on those body parts. Likewise, neither the *urine* nor the faeces are the self. Also *the flesh and the skin are not the self*, because the self is merely imputed on them.

*The flesh and skin are not the self, [59]
The heat and air are not the self,
The holes are not the self, and certainly the
Six primary consciousnesses are not the self.*

The heat and the air and so forth, *are not the self*. Here the four elements of fire, air, space and consciousnesses are refuted as examples of the self. Neither the fire element nor the wind element, nor the *holes* like the nostrils and so forth, which are the space element, are the self. And *certainly the six primary consciousnesses are also not the self*.

None of the six elements are the self because the self is merely imputed in dependence on them. This refutation of approaching the analysis from the point of view of the six elements is accordance with Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, where the same reasoning is used. None of the six elements individually are the self, and the self is also not contained in the mere collection of the six aggregates, because the self is merely labelled in dependence on the six aggregates.

Review

At the beginning of *Introduction to the Middle Way* it says, 'In order to liberate sentient beings from cyclic existence, he taught selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena'. What is the difference between the two selflessnesses?

Student: The base is different.

What is the difference between self-grasping at person and the view of the transitory collections?

Student: The view of the transitory collection is self-grasping at the person of one's own continuum, while self-grasping at person is self-grasping at person in general.

If it is self-grasping at person, is it necessarily the view of the transitory collection?

Student: No. Grasping at the self of person in another person's continuum is not the transitory view.

What is the meaning of cyclic existence?

Student: Being bound to the contaminated aggregates by karma and afflictions.

Then that means the person is cyclic existence, because the person is bound to the contaminated aggregates.

Take the example of a person who is bound to a tree: the tree is cyclic existence, the rope is karma and afflictions, and the person is the self. We are bound to cyclic existence by karma and contaminated aggregates. Sometimes the meaning of cyclic existence is defined as that which takes repeated rebirth through karma and afflictions.

What is the object of the negation of the self of person?

Student: The person not found under direct analysis.

I was looking for the inherent or intrinsically existing person. This leads on to the next question. What is the meaning of inherent existence? If one doesn't refute the inherently existing person, one doesn't arrive at the lack of inherent existence.

Student question: Is a person existing independently, by way of its own nature, including being independent from the designating thought, the object of negation?

That is correct.

The Svatantrika-Madhyamaka say that a person, while not existing independently of the imputed mind, still has something from its own side. The Mind Only say that it exists out of its own uncommon mode of abiding. The Svatantrika-Madhyamaka say that everything is merely labelled, while the Prasangika say that everything is merely labelled 'on', emphasising that there is nothing from the side of object.

Is the person to be found somewhere as part of the elements?

Students: No.

The absence of person among the elements is the subtle emptiness. Sometimes, when one analyses too hard one falls into nihilism.

Student: Can you say a few more words about why consciousness is not the self. We keep coming back to this time and again. What is the most compelling way of dismissing that idea?

We say, 'my mind'. There is a feeling that the mind belongs to one. This is the indication that the consciousness is not the self. Because the thought of 'I' it is not generated with regard to the body, or aggregates. There is another basis with regards to which one thinks 'I'.