
Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

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Please generate the virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. In order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound Dharma, and put it into practice as quick as I can'.

2.2.2.1.4. Close placement by mindfulness on phenomena

Last time we dealt very briefly with the close placement by mindfulness on phenomena.

*In such a way the generation of all phenomena [105cd]
Is not realised.*

These two lines explicitly show the selflessness of compounded phenomena. They say that the inherent generation of compounded phenomena is not realised, because compounded phenomena disintegrate moment by moment. The reason non-compounded phenomena are not explicitly included is because by realising the selflessness of compounded phenomena, one can easily understand the selflessness of non-compounded phenomena as well.

Compounded phenomena lack inherent generation. One reason for this is that compounded phenomena follow the three steps of generation, abiding and disintegration. They have no choice: initially they are generated, then they abide, and finally they disintegrate. If one is trying to take some meaning from inherent existence: if compounded phenomena were generated inherently they should be empowered to abide according to choice, and there would be no need for involuntary disintegration.

2.2.2.2. REFUTING OBJECTIONS TO THE TWO TRUTHS

The **Realists** say that the presentation of the two truths becomes invalid if compounded and non-compounded phenomena do not exist inherently. This objection is refuted in three steps.

2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the improbability of the two truths

2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the improbability of valid reason

2.2.2.2.3. Refuting the consequence of infiniteness

2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the improbability of the two truths

*In case, 'in such a way the illusory does not exist; [106ab]
How could both truths exist on it?*

The **Realists** ask, 'How can the two truths possibly exist if the conventional illusory does not exist? How can the conventional illusory exist if compounded and non-compounded phenomena do not exist inherently? It cannot as there is no basis. If there is no basis for conventional illusory existence then there is no basis for ultimate truth, which is the selflessness of conventional illusory existence'.

If phenomena do not exist inherently then the

conventional illusory phenomena, such as vases and so forth, do not exist, and if they do not exist then also their suchness cannot exist. Therefore there would be no two truths. The consequence is that there are no two truths if phenomena do not exist inherently.

*If it is illusory because of another, [106cd]
How can sentient being go beyond misery?*

The **Realists** say to the **Prasangika**, 'You accept that forms, sounds and so forth are illusory because, while appearing as true to the illusion grasping at inherent existence, they lack true existence from their side'.

The **Realists** continue by saying, 'You accept that forms, sounds and so forth exist only conventionally because, while appearing as true to the illusion grasping at inherent existence, they lack true existence from their side. If we look at this then your conventional existence is no different from the existence of the snake for the mind that grasps at the rope as snake - it is a mere elaboration by another awareness. In that case it follows that sentient beings cannot conventionally go beyond misery, because all conventional existence is a mere elaboration by a distorted awareness'.

*This superstitious mind apart [107ab]
Is not our illusion.*

What the **Realists** assume is that the mind through which nominal truth is posited is true grasping, because that is the mind relative to which one talks about truth. This is refuted here by the **Madhyamaka** who say, 'The object that appears to the superstitious conceptual mind of true grasping is not our conventional truth. That is not what we assert as nominal truth'.

Then the **Realists** ask, 'What then is your way of positing a nominal truth?'

*If this is ascertained subsequently it exists, [107cd]
If it is not it is not even an illusion.*

This shows the presentation of subtle nominal truth as asserted by the **Prasangika**. It says that subtle conventional truth is only realised after having realised emptiness. When it says it is 'ascertained subsequently it exists' this means that if, after having realised emptiness, the illusory object is ascertained as being able to perform functions and actions, then that illusory object is subtle conventional truth. If, after having realised emptiness, the illusory object is not ascertained as possessing a function and activity, then it is not even an illusion, it is not even a conventional truth, and does not even exist nominally.

We have been over this before but we can repeat it once more. One should not think of the lack of inherent existence as non-existence. When we think of an object lacking inherent existence we should think of the object as existing interdependently and relative to other objects. In such a way one is able to combine appearance and emptiness. That is how one can understand the **Prasangika** presentation of subtle conventional truth. Initially one has to understand emptiness. Subsequently to realising emptiness one analyses illusory phenomena, and if these illusory phenomena possesses characteristics such as being able to perform functions, and the activities of coming and going and so forth, then they are conventional truths.

If a phenomenon does not possess those characteristics then it is not even a conventional illusory truth. It is completely non-existent. To understand this presentation of the subtle conventional truth one needs to be able to unify appearance and emptiness. As was said before, when one thinks of a phenomenon as lacking inherent existence, one should not think of the phenomenon as being completely non-existent. Rather one should think of it as being a dependently arisen phenomenon, a phenomenon that exists in dependence on, or relative to, other phenomena.

In such a way one has understood that being empty is not contradicted by appearance. When one reflects on the phenomenon as existing interdependently, then one can understand that the phenomenon lacks inherent existence, and in such a way one can understand that its appearance is not contradicted by the emptiness of the object. In such a way one is able to unify appearance and emptiness.

When you say that form lacks inherent existence you have to think about what is implicit in the lack of inherent existence of form. You should reflect upon this. *[pause for reflection]*

When we say that a phenomenon is a dependent arising then what can we understand that is implicit in that. You should reflect on this for a minute. *[pause for reflection]*

By reflecting on dependent arising one understands the lack of total independence, and by understanding the lack of total independence one understands the lack of inherent existence. *[pause for reflection]*

It is very important to be able to unify appearance and emptiness, and to understand that the appearance of the object does not contradict its lack of inherent existence, or its emptiness, and that the emptiness of the object does not contradict its appearance.

Lama Tsong Khapa says that if one does not understand this unification of emptiness and appearance one will not understand the thought of the Buddha.

2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the improbability of valid reason

Conceptual thought and that imputed [108ab]
Are both mutually reliant.

The imputing thought and the object that is being imputed exist relative to each other. They are mutually interdependent and therefore they do not exist from their own side in the slightest degree.

Just as in dependence on renown [108cd]
All investigations are called

The imputing thought and that which is imputed are both mutually reliant, and therefore do not exist from their own side. They do not exist inherently and therefore they exist through renown as merely imputed phenomena to nominal valid cognition. Similarly, the all phenomena exist only nominally, in mere name.

The worldly way is to accept without question the reality with which one is presented. For example, one accepts without questioning that this object on the table is a clock, because it is renowned as a clock, and labelled as a clock. The worldly way is to just accept what one is presented with without investigation and analysis. The Prasangika

say that the way nominal truth exists in mere name is that it is posited without investigation and analysis.

2.2.2.2.3. Refuting the consequence of infiniteness

At the time when the investigating [109]
Intelligence analyses,
If the analytical intelligence is
Subsequent to intelligence then it is infinite.

'At the time' refers to the time of investigating the lack of true existence. This verse is asking whether, when an investigating intelligence analyses and ascertains the lack of true existence of all phenomena, another investigating intelligence is needed to understand the lack of true existence of the first investigative intelligence? Or is no other investigative intelligence needed? If another investigative intelligence is needed subsequent to the investigative intelligence that understands the lack of true existence of all phenomena, then one arrives at the consequence that one would need an infinite number of investigative intelligences, each one realising the lack of true existence of the previous one and so forth.

To express it more simply, if we have the wisdom that realises the emptiness of the aggregates then is another wisdom needed to realise the emptiness of that wisdom or not? If it is the case that one needs a subsequent wisdom that realises the emptiness of the initial wisdom, then logically one needs a limitless amount of wisdoms in order to be able to realise the emptiness of all phenomena.

Having investigated the analysed object [110ab]
There is no basis for investigation.

If a separate wisdom is not needed to realise the emptiness of the initial wisdom, then one can also say that there is no wisdom needed to realise the emptiness of that which is initially investigated, such as the aggregates. If nothing is needed to investigate the investigator, then also there is nothing needed to investigate that which initially investigated. If no second wisdom is needed to investigate the initial wisdom, then the investigation by the initial wisdom of the initial object of investigation is also not needed since all phenomena would be the same in not lacking inherent existence.

Since there is no basis it is not born [110cd]
This is also called going beyond misery.

The answer is that no second wisdom is needed to investigate the true nature of the initial wisdom, because when the initial wisdom realises the lack of inherent existence of its analysed object, such as the aggregates, there is no appearance of true existence to that wisdom. Therefore at that time there is no basis for further investigation into the lack of true existence at that time.

Also, as long as the realisation of the lack of true existence of all phenomena is active there is no object that is characterised by the analysis of whether or not the object exists truly or not, because as soon as one's consciousness starts to think that way, one immediately remembers that all phenomena lack true existence.

Also, the realisation of the lack of true existence of all phenomena overcomes any type of intellectually acquired true-grasping. Further, if the object lacks true existence, then both the object possessor and the object lack true

existence and are not generated inherently. This lack of inherent existence of the object and the object possessor is also called 'going beyond misery', which is their natural nirvana. By meditating on the natural nirvana one will attain the nirvana that is the abandonment of the adventitious obscurations.

It is good to think that by meditating on natural nirvana, one will attain the actual nirvana that is the abandonment of the adventitious obscurations. Let's say the meditator meditates on the emptiness of form. After having refuted the object of negation, truly existent form, and realising its emptiness, then by meditating on the emptiness that is realised, the meditator will attain the nirvana that is the abandonment of the adventitious afflictions.

At that time one does not go on to investigate the emptiness of the mind that realises the emptiness, which would be an unnecessary investigative activity. When one has arrived at the realisation of the emptiness of one object then does not go on and investigate the emptiness of the mind realising emptiness. At that time it is sufficient to stop with the emptiness of the present object. Later, of course, the emptiness of the object possessor will also be investigated. This is how one attains the actual liberation.

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