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## Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་སློ་

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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 going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

### 2.2.3. STATING THE REASONS ESTABLISHING SELFLESSNESS

After refuting the arguments of those asserting that things exist inherently comes the assertion of the arguments of those positing the lack of inherent existence.

2.2.3.1. Analysis of the cause - the vajra sliver reasoning

2.2.3.2. Analysis of the nature - the reasoning of dependent arising

2.2.3.3. Analysis of the result - the reasoning of the generation and ending of existence and non-existence

#### 2.2.3.1. THE DIAMOND, OR VAJRA, SLIVER REASONING

The *vajra* in vajra sliver reasoning refers to a particular kind of vajra called the space vajra, which can destroy anything. Nothing can stand in its way, it even has the power to destroy Mount Meru and so forth.

The vajra sliver reasoning is an analysis of the cause. We went through this reasoning, which eliminates generation from the four extremes, in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*<sup>1</sup>. It is referred to as the vajra sliver reasoning because it destroys the four views of extreme generation:

2.2.3.1.1. The object is generated without any cause

2.2.3.1.2. The object is generated from other

2.2.3.1.3. The object is generated from self

2.2.3.1.4. The object is generated from both

##### 2.2.3.1.1. Refuting Generation from No-Cause [Carvaka]

*If it is asked, 'by which different causes?' [117]*

*Of course by the preceding different causes.*

*Why can a cause generate an effect?*

*From the preceding cause's mere force.*

The **Carvakas** assert that objects such as the sun, the moon, sharp thorns, the colours on a butterfly's wings and so forth are generated from no cause, and exist out of their own nature. They say, 'I have not seen anybody creating these objects, so therefore they must have risen out of themselves'.

*Right now, the direct perception of worldly beings [116ab]*

*Sees all causes.*

**Shantideva** says, 'Right now, to refute this view of yours I am not going to use any type of ultimate analysis. I am only going to refute you with a worldly nominal reasoning. For the time being, I am not going to use any ultimate reasoning, I am just going to use nominal reasoning.'

Worldly beings see most of the different causes that produce the different worldly effects such as a harvest. If they did not see the causes that produce the harvest then they would not engage in the manifold activities that produce a crop. But, because they can see that planting seed produces a crop, they engage in the effort of planting seed to get a harvest. The different categories of effects are generated by different categories of causes.'

*The different petals of the lotus*

[116cd]

*Are generated by different causes.*

**Carvakas**: 'From which diverse causes are the different results generated?'

**Shantideva**: 'The different categories of results such as the different petals of the lotus, the different colours on the butterfly's wings and so forth, are all generated by different preceding causes.'

**Carvakas**: 'Why can diverse causes generate diverse effects?'

The **response** is because of the force of the preceding causes. Secondly, one can say that all compounded phenomena are generated from a cause, because they are only generated occasionally. Because compounded phenomena are only generated when all the causes and conditions come together, this shows that they are generated from a cause. If they were actually generated from no cause at all, then there would be no reason for their occasional nature. They would always be there.

##### 2.2.3.1.2. Refuting generation from a permanent cause apart

###### 2.2.3.1.2.1. Refuting a creator god (Ishvara) [Particularists, Logicians and Enumerators, or Vaisheshika, Naiyayika, Samkya]

Here **Ishvara** is asserted as a creator god that precedes all of existence. This is asserted by the Particularists or Vaisheshikas, the Logicians or Naiyayikas, and the Samkya Enumerators. Not all enumerators assert **Ishvara** as the creator god, though. One section asserts **Ishvara** as the creator god, and another section doesn't.

The idea is that initially one has **Ishvara**, the creator god who is naturally generated out of himself. Then he creates all the different categories of awareness and objects of knowledge, the different worlds and the beings therein and so forth, through movement of his consciousness. They assert that **Ishvara** is both permanent, omniscient, and that movement of his consciousness precedes the different categories of objects of knowledge, the different worlds, and the beings in those worlds.

*If Ishvara is the cause of migrators*

[118ab]

*What is posited as the entity of Ishvara?*

Initially the basic question, 'What is the meaning of **Ishvara**?' is asked. One can learn a lot from this approach. **Shantideva** does not immediately enter into an argument designed to refute **Ishvara** as the creator of all of

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 6, *Introduction to the Middle Way*, verses 6.8c to 6.113, 15 April 2003 to 20 April 2004.

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existence, but asks 'Exactly what do you mean when you refer to Ishvara?' This is a very useful approach. Instead of immediately contradicting the other person's view, one first asks, 'Exactly what is your thesis?'

*If you say, 'the elements,' it might be like that. [118cd]  
Why get strung out over a name?*

Because the elements can be seen as a source from which everything arises, the possibility that Ishvara is the elements is examined. The **Madhyamaka** say, 'We agree that the increase and decrease in the elements produces the increase and decrease of the effects. Therefore, from this point of view, if you refer to the elements as Ishvara the creator god, then there is really not much to debate, as it's just a discussion about how to label the same thing.

*However, since earth and so forth are many, [119]  
And impermanent, they are not immutable, not god.  
Since they are stepped upon and impure  
They are not Ishvara.*

**Madhyamaka:** You assert Ishvara as partless and immutable, having consciousness that establishes the worlds merely by thinking about them, being pure, being god, and also being outstanding. Therefore the elements of earth and so forth cannot be Ishvara, because Ishvara is partless, and they are diverse. The elements are impermanent, therefore they are not immutable, nor are the elements a god. Also, the elements are stepped upon and impure, and therefore they are not Ishvara.

*Space is not Ishvara because it is immutable. [120]  
That the self is not Ishvara has been proven earlier.  
Even a creator beyond thought,  
What good is it to describe that beyond thought*

Space is not Ishvara because space is immutable, while Ishvara has to have a movement of consciousness that precedes all of existence. And it has been proven earlier that the self is not permanent or partless.'

To this the **Carvaka** reply, 'All of that does not really matter to us, because Ishvara is beyond comprehension anyway'.

To this **Shantideva** replies, 'If Ishvara is beyond comprehension, then essentially you are talking about something that you don't comprehend. So what are you doing expressing a creator beyond thought? If Ishvara the creator god is incomprehensible, then it is not known by you, it is not known by us, it is not known by anybody. Stop talking about something you do not comprehend.'

#### **2.2.3.1.2.2. If it is permanent it is unsuitable to have conditions and to be the cause of all**

*What does he want to create? [121abc]  
Isn't the nature of the self,  
Earth and so forth, and Ishvara permanent?*

As was also explained earlier the Vaisheshika, Naiyayika and Samkya assert a permanent self. Here, the 'earth and so forth' does not refer to the coarse elements, but to the particles that form these elements. While the elements are impermanent, the particles of the elements are permanent. They also, of course, assert that Ishvara itself is permanent. Hence, what does Ishvara create? Ishvara is permanent, the self is permanent and also the particles that make up the elements are permanent. All of these are unsuitable to generate a result because of being

permanent.

*Consciousness is generated from the object of  
knowledge [121d]  
And the beginningless happiness and sufferings from  
karma. [122ab]  
Tell, what is generated by him?*

These tenet holders are not nihilists, because they do assert karmic cause and effect. Rather they are eternalists. **Shantideva** asks, 'What is generated by Ishvara? Can you come up with anything?' The objects arise from the elements, and the consciousness of the objects arises from the objects. For example, eye-consciousness arises from visual form. The beginningless happiness and sufferings that one experiences in cyclic existence arise from karma. Hence Shantideva asks the Carvaka, 'Please tell me, what is left that is generated by Ishvara? It is not possible to posit an effect that is generated by Ishvara!'

These reasonings are very good to keep in mind, because it seems that there are many followers of Ishvara in the West, who follow the Hindu Tantric sex system. It is quite good to understand this reasoning so as to be able to refute Ishvara.

*If there is no first cause, [122cd]  
How could there be a first result.*

This refers to the feelings of happiness and suffering that one experiences at the present time. If one asserts Ishvara as the direct cause for those feelings of happiness and suffering, then logically, since Ishvara has existed since beginningless time, those feelings of happiness and suffering should have existed since beginningless time.

*Why should he not always produce, [123]  
He does not rely on other conditions.  
If there is nothing not produced by him  
How could he rely on these?*

'Why should Ishvara not continuously produce the present causes and conditions? He produces all effects and does not rely on any other conditions. This follows because if there is no effect not created by Ishvara then what conditions would Ishvara need to produce his effects. If there were simultaneously acting conditions then they would also have to be created by Ishvara.'

Ordinarily a cause needs concurrently acting conditions to produce a result. Consider, for example, the generation of the sprout. Ordinarily a whole group of causes and conditions, including a seed, is needed for the generation of the sprout. But what concurrently acting conditions would Ishvara have, since those concurrently acting conditions would also have to be generated by him. Therefore it follows that he would generate all the effects all the time.

*If he relies then the aggregation [124ab]  
Is the cause and not him.*

Actually it is the completion of the causes and conditions that is the cause for the generation of the sprout. If the completion of all the conditions is not the cause for the sprout to be generated, and it depends solely on the wish of Ishvara, then the sprout should be generated at any time that Ishvara wants, even when the causes and conditions are not complete. If the generation depends on all the causes or conditions being complete, then the

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aggregation of causes and conditions is the cause and not Ishvara.

*If there is aggregation he is powerless to prevent generation.* [124cd]

*If there is no aggregation he has no power to generate.*

One can observe that the sprout will definitely be generated whenever all the causes and conditions are complete. If the causes and conditions are not complete, then without any independence on their part, the sprout will not be generated. It does not depend on Ishvara's wishes.

*If he creates despite not wishing to do so* [125]  
*The he is under the power of other.*  
*Even though wishing he depends on the wish.*  
*Though acting, how can he be Ishvara?*

**Carvaka:** 'The suffering of the lower realms is generated through the force of karma, without his intention.'

**Shantideva:** 'In that case he is not omnipotent. If he creates, even though not wishing it, then he is under the power of other and not omnipotent. If Ishvara's creation of existence depends on his wish, then he is under the control of his wish and therefore also not independent. In fact his wish would become Ishvara, but wishes are impermanent. In any case, how can he be the creator of everything? If he creates the sufferings of sentient beings, then how could Ishvara be regarded as superior? How could anybody who creates suffering for sentient beings be regarded as superior?

If one's happiness and suffering was determined by the wish of Ishvara, then one would be without freedom, and be completely under the control of Ishvara. We refuted the assertion of particles as being permanent earlier, when we refuted the assertion of partless particles.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright*  
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*Edited Version*

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