
Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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You should all generate a virtuous motivation.

Previously we talked about worldly contradictions saying that something is a worldly contradiction if one contradicts something that is commonly accepted, such as a clay pot or a vase and so forth. Those phenomena exist validly according to worldly convention. If we say that they are not those phenomena then we contradict worldly convention.

Things can only be labelled validly if they are labelled according to worldly convention, for example, depending on the physical form of the child then we label it either a boy or girl. This labelling is done according to worldly convention, and one can't just label something as one wishes. For example if we label something as 'white' when isn't white, then that contradicts worldly convention, and will be contradicted by worldly convention.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.2. Rejecting Objection through Nominal Non-existence of Generation from Other

Since generation from other doesn't even exist nominally, its refutation cannot be contradicted by worldly perception. Generation from other doesn't exist even according to worldly convention, and even if it did exist according to worldly convention, that would still not contradict the refutation of ultimate generation from other. However, generation from other doesn't exist even nominally, and this is explained in this verse,

*Worldly beings, having merely planted the seed claim
'I have fathered this child' and also think
'I have planted this tree'. Hence, generation from
other
Doesn't exist even according to worldly beings.*

Having shown that generation from other doesn't exist ultimately, which is also accepted by the lower tenets, it then goes on to show that generation from other doesn't even exist nominally. Here it goes on to refute even nominal generation from other.

Mirror:

Generation from other doesn't exist even nominally because worldly beings claim, 'I have generated this child' and think, 'I have planted this tree' merely because of having planted the seed.

What it says in this verse is that in the continuum of sentient beings there is no innate grasping at cause and effect being of an intrinsically different nature. It shows that the assertion of cause and effect as being of intrinsically different nature exists only in the continuum of tenet holders, and doesn't even exist nominally.

Naturally the father thinks that a child came about as an effect of planting his seed in the mother's womb; he doesn't have the idea that the child was placed in the womb already made. This shows that the father naturally assumes that there is a cause and effect relationship between his seed and the child, and also between himself and the child. He doesn't think that they are totally unrelated.

Generation from other doesn't exist even nominally according to worldly convention, because the father naturally thinks, 'I have fathered this child', through having planted his seed in the mother's womb. So there is the idea that there is a relationship. There's not the idea, 'Oh, the son has been planted in the mother's womb ready-made with all the characteristics'. This shows that even according to worldly convention generation from other doesn't exist nominally.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.3¹. The Qualities of the Refutation

Having refuted generation from self, there would be different faults arising if one didn't refute generation from other.

There are different qualities if you refute generation from other subsequently to having refuted generation from self. These are the qualities this heading refers to.

It needs to be clear here that the refutation of generation from other refers to the refutation of the generation of an inherently existing effect from an inherently existing cause. It doesn't negate the generation of an effect that is other from the cause; it doesn't negate generation of cause and effect that are other from each other so to speak, where the cause is different or other from the effect, or the effect is other from the cause.

When we say we negate generation from other, what is being negated is the generation of an inherently existent effect from an inherently existing cause. That's what it refers to here. That has to be, otherwise it gets confusing.

When we think about cause and effect then it is also good to combine that with a contemplation of how there cannot be a generation of an inherently existent effect from an inherently existent cause. Nagarjuna's homage in *Root Wisdom* says that there is no ceasing, there is no generation, there is no coming, and there is no going. It is good if you contemplate that homage in the same manner, that there is no inherently existing ceasing, there is no intrinsic generation, there is no intrinsic going, and there is no intrinsic coming. Even just contemplating a little bit that the effect doesn't exist inherently, that the cause doesn't exist inherently, and that a non-inherently existent effect is generated from a non-inherently existing cause, is very meritorious.

The root text reads,

*The sprout isn't other from seed. Therefore,
At the time of sprout the ceased seed doesn't exist.
Also because they aren't one it shouldn't be said
That the seed exists at the time of the sprout.*

At the time when the sprout is generated, there is no interruption in the continuity of the seed that has ceased

¹ Ed: This was incorrectly numbered in the *Mirror* booklet.

to exist. So the seed doesn't cease to exist intrinsically. There's no intrinsic cessation of the seed and therefore the continuity of the seed is uninterrupted. If there were to be an intrinsic cessation of the seed then the continuity of the seed would be interrupted, and the seed couldn't exist at the time of the sprout. Here it is again refuting intrinsic existence by saying that if the cause ceases intrinsically, then it couldn't bring about an effect. Therefore by stating that the effect is present, the cause does not cease intrinsically.

The sprout exists in the continuum of the seed that has ceased to exist, and since the continuum of the seed, which has ceased to exist, exists at the time of the sprout therefore the seed does not intrinsically cease to exist. If the seed and the sprout were to exist inherently then the seed and the sprout could not be cause and effect. Then it would follow that the seed and the sprout are not a cause and effect. The fault that would exist if the seed and the sprout were to exist inherently is that the continuity of the seed that has ceased to exist would be severed, and could not be present at the time of the sprout. But that fault is non-existent. So although the seed has ceased to exist, the continuity of the seed exists at the time of the sprout, and hence the sprout and the seed don't exist inherently.

Should the seed and the sprout exist inherently then at the time of the sprout the subsequent continuum of the similar type of the seed could not exist, but would be severed. Since the subsequent continuum of the seed that has ceased to exist does exist at the time of the sprout, this shows that the seed and the sprout don't exist inherently.

The seed and the sprout don't exist inherently, and since they don't exist inherently, the presence of the sprout supports the presence of the subsequent continuum of similar type of the seed. Should the seed and the sprout exist inherently then they would be two totally unrelated phenomena, and the existence of the sprout wouldn't benefit the presence of the subsequent similar type of the seed. They would then be totally unrelated, and there would be an interruption of the continuity of the seed that has ceased to exist.

Should the seed and the sprout exist inherently, then the existence of the sprout wouldn't benefit the existence of subsequent similar type of the seed. So, for example, in the continuum of ordinary individuals, afflictions exist, whereas in the continuum of arhats those afflictions are non-existent. The non-existence of the afflictions in the continuum of the arhat doesn't benefit the non-interruption of the continuity of the afflictions in the continuum of ordinary individuals.

Because they aren't one it shouldn't be said that the seed exists at the time of the sprout. That conclusion refers to the reasoning we have previously mentioned, where should the seed and the sprout be intrinsically one, then if one is present the other one should also be present. But the seed doesn't exist at the time of the sprout, and the sprout doesn't exist at the time of the seed, hence we can say that they are not an inherently existent one.

Mirror says:

Further, it shouldn't be said that the seed exists at

the time of sprout. That is ***because*** seed and sprout are cause and effect since seed and sprout ***aren't one.***

If the seed and sprout were one then they would have to be completely one, and one would have to exist at the time of the other.

If the seed and the sprout exist inherently then they would have to be either an inherently existent one or different from each other. In either of those two cases they wouldn't go beyond the extremes of either eternalism or nihilism. They would have become eternal, or they would become totally non-existent.

Since we can posit a cause, the seed and the sprout as a cause and effect from the point of view of them not existing inherently, they also don't fall into the extremes of eternalism or nihilism. So one doesn't fall into either of those two extremes.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.4. Showing Inherent Generation to be Completely Non-existent²

This has two outlines: refuting the position of asserting inherent existence; and refuting objections to their refutation.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.4.1. Refuting Those Asserting Inherent Existence

This has three sub-outlines: the consequence that an arya's equipoise would negate existence; the consequence that nominal truth would bear examination; and the consequence that ultimate generation wouldn't be negated

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.4.1.1. The Consequence That an Arya's Equipoise Would Negate Existence

Here inherent existence is refuted with the consequence that should things exist inherently then they would be negated by an arya's meditative equipoise.

Primarily this deals with the **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** who accept the negation of ultimate generation from other, and who accept the negation of ultimate generation, but who still assert inherent generation and inherent existence, saying even though phenomena don't exist ultimately, they still exist nominally and therefore they exist inherently. The **Prasangika** refute them saying,

***If inherent existence is relied upon
Phenomena become extinct through negation of it.
Therefore
Emptiness would become the cause of phenomena's
annihilation.
That doesn't make sense, which proves that
phenomena don't exist.***

If inherent existence is relied upon, if form and so forth rely for their generation upon inherently existent causes and conditions then

Mirror states:

Take the subject 'meditative equipoise of an arya realising emptiness' - it follows it realises emptiness though the **negation of** the nature of

² Ed: This heading was mistakenly omitted from the body of the text in *Mirror*.

phenomena and becomes *the cause of phenomena's extinction* - because it realises phenomena's lack of inherent existence.

It follows *that phenomena don't exist* inherently because if they were to exist inherently then the meditative equipoise realising emptiness would become the cause of their annihilation and *that doesn't make sense*.

If phenomena were to exist inherently then they would be the object of an arya's meditative equipoise, because if phenomena existed intrinsically or inherently then they become the ultimate mode of abiding, which is the object of an arya's meditative equipoise. Hence if phenomena were to exist inherently, then they would be the object of an arya's meditative equipoise, because they would be the final mode of abiding. That is the reasoning.

If functionalities were to initially exist inherently, but then became non-existent during an arya's meditative equipoise, then the arya's meditative equipoise would be the cause for their annihilation, and that doesn't make sense.

So it is illogical to say that phenomena exist inherently because then the consequence that would follow would be that an arya's meditative equipoise would become the cause of the annihilation of those phenomena .

If one asserted that forms and so forth are generated from inherently existent causes and conditions, then that would mean that one would also say that an arya's meditative equipoise would deny the existence of forms and so forth. Did you somewhat understand that?

The **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** assert that phenomena exist inherently. So if one says that phenomena exist inherently then it follows that an arya's meditative equipoise would deny the existence of phenomena, because an arya's meditative equipoise denies inherent existence.

Holding of something that is actually existent to be non-existent is called denial.

The Svatantrika say that that functionalities do exist inherently, and the **Prasangika** say that functionalities or functioning phenomena, don't exist inherently.

The Prasangika say that an arya's meditative equipoise realises functionalities lack inherent existence. Since an arya's meditative equipoise realises functionalities lack inherent existence, they refute inherent existence. Then the consequence would follow that should functionalities exist inherently the Prasangika actually refute functionalities altogether. That's one thing.

The other thing is that should functionalities exist inherently, then it would follow that they would be the object of an arya's meditative equipoise, because then if they exist inherently they would be the final mode of abiding. If they were the final mode of abiding they would be an arya's meditative equipoise.

The **Svatantrika** assert inherent existence and an arya's meditative equipoise. The **Prasangika** do not say that an arya's meditative equipoise is really the cause for the annihilation of phenomena. They just state to the Svatantrika that if you assert that functionalities exist

inherently then the logical consequence is that an arya's meditative equipoise would become the cause for the extinction of those functionalities, because an arya's meditative equipoise realises the lack of inherent existence.

The **Svatantrika** say that phenomena exist and are established inherently. As an arya's meditative equipoise realises the absence of inherent existence it would then follow that such meditative equipoise would become the cause for the extinction of the phenomenon. So an arya's meditative equipoise negates inherent functionalities. It's like saying, 'Before you came to my house that object was standing there, but after you left the object was gone, so it's quite logical to say that you took it'. Similarly if you say that before the generation of an arya's meditative equipoise phenomena existed inherently, but once an arya's meditative equipoise has negated inherent existence then one would have to say, 'Oh an arya's meditative equipoise has negated functionalities, because they don't exist anymore at the time of an arya's meditative equipoise'.

Should functionalities exist intrinsically then an arya's meditative equipoise would become the cause for their annihilation, because an arya's meditative equipoise negates inherent existence.

So that's the direction you have to think in when it says it follows that the consequence that an arya's meditative equipoise would negate existence. It is from the point of view that if one accepts inherent existence then the acceptance of inherent existence is refuted with the consequence that an arya's meditative equipoise would negate existence.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.4.1.2. The Consequence That Nominal Truth Would Bear Examination

*When such phenomena are analysed
Nothing is found other than
Their actual nature. Therefore
Worldly nominal truth shouldn't be investigated.*

If phenomena were to exist inherently then nominal truth would bear examination.

The **Prasangika** assert that the imputed meaning cannot be found at the time of analysis. Hence the Prasangika assert that there is no inherent existence. The **lower schools** assert inherent existence and they say that the imputed meaning can be found at the time of analysis.

Here the **Prasangika** say that if there was inherent existence then the imputed meaning could be found at the time of analysis, and nominal truth would bear examination, phenomena such as forms and so forth would bear examination.

Worldly nominal truth shouldn't be investigated with reasons because when such phenomena as forms and so forth are analysed they aren't found to exist.

When we investigate functionalities such as forms and so forth, then apart from their ultimate nature, the lack of ultimate generation and cessation, nothing can be found.

When it talks about the non-finding of the imputed meaning at the time of analysis we analyse whether any of the parts of the objects exist inherently or not. In the

end we cannot find the existence of any inherent or intrinsic part. At the time of ultimate analysis phenomena cannot be found. Here it is talking about an ultimate investigation, which is related to the arya's meditative equipoise on suchness. To that equipoise those phenomena don't exist.

Phenomena don't exist inherently but they exist nominally. They exist only nominally, being imputed by name, and through being labelled with a name. Therefore at the time of ultimate analysis they cannot be found. So they don't exist inherently but exist as merely labelled.

Phenomena don't exist inherently. If they were to exist inherently then they would have to be found at the time of analysing the imputed meaning, and that would mean that they would have to be found by an arya's meditative equipoise. Since they are not found by an arya's meditative equipoise they don't exist inherently.

[Student question unclear]

What type of freedom are you talking about? Freedom comes about through familiarisation. Through continuous meditation and familiarisation then one gains freedom. The seed in the field doesn't produce an effect without being fertilised and facilitated with different conditions. Likewise our karma doesn't just produce effects independently. The generation of a karmic effect also needs to be facilitated by different conditions.

Also the previously accumulated karma is non-existent at the present time. What we carry around with us is the potential of that karma. The karmic cause has to meet with effects, similarly to the seed in the field. The potential of the karma is placed on the mental consciousness, and then goes from life to life with that mental consciousness until it is ripened with different conditions.

Its like in photography where when you have the negative you know that you can't see the picture very clearly. Only after it has been developed can you see the picture clearly, and in order to see the picture clearly you need different conditions. Did you understand that?

We have many different karmic potentials in our mindstream, and until they meet with the right conditions they won't ripen. For example there can be the karma that you have to die during a car accident, but if you don't drive then you won't experience that karma. There are also some people who have a car accident but who don't die, because there's not the karma.

*Transcribed from tape by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

Edited Version

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