
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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Generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to be able to do so I'm going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I'm going to put it into practice as much as possible.'

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.4. Showing Inherent Generation to be Completely Non-Existent (cont.)

As we said the other day, a cause that lacks intrinsic existence generates an effect that also lacks intrinsic existence. Despite the cause lacking intrinsic existence, it can still generate an effect. Here the analogy used was that of a reflection in a mirror that, according to worldly perception, generates a false or distorted eye-consciousness, which perceives that reflection as being the actual form. Despite the reflection being false and empty of being the actual form, it still can generate a false eye-consciousness, which perceives that reflection as the actual form.

What one should reflect upon here is how cause and effect and the lack of inherent existence are not only compatible, but actually support each other. One cannot say that the cause generates an effect even though it lacks inherent existence, but because the cause lacks inherent existence it can therefore generate an effect. Here, by reflecting upon the analogy, the understanding that should be generated in our mind is that cause and effect and the lack of inherent existence support each other.

Generating an understanding that form lacks inherent existence but is still existent as merely labelled is an understanding that is difficult to come by. One needs to reflect upon this point again and again, not thinking that just because the form lacks inherent existence it therefore has to become non-existent. Rather, one needs to combine the lack of inherent existence with nominal existence.

As it is said in *Illumination*, one has to make a clear distinction between existence and inherent existence, and between non-existence and non-inherent existence.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.5. Showing the Qualities of Refuting Generation from Other with the Two Truths

This is the fifth outline of the heading Refuting Generation from Other in General. It has two sub-outlines: the quality of easily refuting nihilistic and eternalistic views; and the quality of affirming the cause and effect relationship.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.5.1. The Quality of Easily Refuting Nihilistic and Eternalistic Views

Regarding the first outline we have two lines in the root text,

***The two truths don't exist inherently
Therefore they aren't eternal or annihilated.***

Mirror:

Take the subjects of 'form etc.' - **they aren't inherently eternal nor** are they inherently **annihilated** subsequently to existing previously - because **the two truths don't exist inherently**.

You can understand this by reflecting upon the meaning of these lines.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.5.2. The Quality of Affirming the Cause-Effect Relationship

This heading has three sub-outlines: no need to accept the mind-basis-of-all if one doesn't assert inherent existence; analogy for how an effect arises from disintegrated karma; and refuting objections.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.5.2.1. No Need to Accept a Universal Mind-Basis if One Doesn't Assert Inherent Existence

Connecting the Boundaries Between the Preceding and the Following

We have just had an explanation of the qualities of abandoning eternalistic and nihilistic views. Then the text says that this is not the only quality present within refuting inherent existence and the two truths. There is another quality, which is the quality of affirming the cause and effect relationship.

Illumination:

The relationship between karmic fruits and karma accumulated a long time ago is valid without creating the concepts of a universal mind basis, mental continuum, inexhaustibility and attainment.

For example in the **Mind Only** system, in order for karma to give rise to an effect even though it ceased a long time ago, the universal mind-basis is asserted as the basis. Then the **Prasangika** refute the universal mind-basis with the reasoning of the lack of true existence. They say that karma doesn't exist truly, therefore it can give rise to an effect, and there's no need for such premises as a universal mind basis, mental continuums acting as the basis for karmic imprints and so forth.

The quality that is shown here is the quality that the cause and effect relationship of karma is valid even without the acceptance of the universal mind-basis for those who don't even accept inherent existence nominally, and who have completely distanced themselves from the eternalistic and nihilistic view.

Of course all of this will be explained in greater detail later. Here the relationship to what was previously explained in the text is established.

Illumination:

According to the interpretation of the scriptures by Nagarjuna and his two main disciples, there's not even one atom of inherent existence. Even though there is not even one atom of inherent existence, it is still possible to give a presentation of action and activity. So this presentation is an uncommon presentation, and in dependence upon this uncommon presentation then we have various types of tenet explanations based on that.

In Nagarjuna's system not even one atom of inherent existence is asserted, but despite this a valid presentation of action and activity is possible. In dependence upon this combination of the lack of inherent existence and the possibility of action and activity, many differences arise between the Prasangika system and the lower tenets. Then, in dependence upon this presentation one can see how the Prasangika differ from the lower tenets.

The Eight Uncommon Features of the Prasangika System

Lama Tsong Khapa goes onto say, 'I will go through some of the major differences here', which leads to the eight uncommon features of the Prasangika system. One shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that those eight characteristics of the Prasangika system are the only uncommon features. There are many other distinguishing features of the Prasangika system, but the eight main ones are listed here.

1. There is no universal mind-basis that is different in nature from the six-fold collection of primary consciousnesses.

2. The uncommon refutation of self-knower.

3. The non-acceptance that through an inherently existing argument the view of suchness can be generated in the mind-stream of the opponent.

4. The need to accept outer existence in the same way as one as accepts consciousness.

5. Both hearers and solitary realisers realise the lack of intrinsic existence of functionalities.

6. The presentation of self-grasping at phenomena as an affliction.

7. The presentation of disintegrated being a functionality.

8. Because of that the uncommon presentation of the three times.

That it says here 'the uncommon presentation of the three times and so forth' indicates that there are more uncommon features of the Prasangika system. One shouldn't be confused by different presentations of the uncommon features of the Prasangika system. For example, in his commentary on the uncommon features Gyalsap Rinpoche lists them differently.

Is the non-acceptance of a universal basis an uncommon feature of the Prasangika system or not?

Students: Yes. No.

Who else doesn't accept the mind-basis-of-all?

Students: The lower schools.

So then, is the non-acceptance of a self-knower an uncommon feature or not?

Student: No.

Who do you posit?

[student answers unclear]

The Vaibashikas don't accept the self-knower and likewise Bhavaviveka doesn't accept the self-knower.

Then is the acceptance of outer existence an uncommon feature of the Prasangika? Who else accepts outer existence?

Student: The Vaibashikas.

And also the Sautrantika. Take the subject 'disintegrated', is it a functionality in other systems or not? The Vaibashikas also say that disintegrated is a functionality.

Is the non-acceptance of intrinsic reason an uncommon feature? It's not an uncommon feature, because the Trangenpas don't accept the generation of an inferential cognisor because they don't accept inferential cognition. They only assert direct cognition to be valid, and therefore they don't accept the generation of an inferential cognisor from an inherently existent reason.

Regarding outer existence the Sautrantika also assert outer existence but they assert intrinsic outer existence, which the Prasangika don't do. The **Prasangika** assert outer existence on the basis of a lack of intrinsic existence. That's the difference.

In short, the reason why the Prasangika make all those assertions is the lack of intrinsic existence. Because they don't accept inherent existence they therefore don't accept a universal mind-basis. The **Mind Only** asserts the universal mind-basis because of their belief in inherent existence. The **Prasangika** on the other hand refute the universal mind-basis because of their assertion of the lack of inherent existence.

Within the Mind Only system there are two schools, the Mind Only Following Scripture and the Mind Only Following Insight. Which system asserts a universal mind-basis? This question is in relation to which of those schools of Mind Only

accepts the eight types of primary consciousness and which one doesn't?

The **Mind Only Following Scripture** assert the collection of eight primary consciousnesses, and the **Mind Only Following Insight** build their presentation of the Mind Only system just on the mere continuity of mental consciousness.

1. No Universal Mind-Basis

The universal mind-basis has several features that distinguish it. First of all it is asserted to be of different nature from the collection of six types of primary consciousness; it is asserted as the place where the karmic imprints are placed; it is also asserted as not being able to clearly distinguish its object; and it doesn't engage its object through the condition of a faculty, a sense power. The basis upon which the karmic imprints are placed is also asserted to be the person.

The reason the **Mind Only** assert the universal foundation as an example for the person is that they are not satisfied with the person just being a mere imputation. At the time of analysis, while searching for the imputed meaning, they are not satisfied with finding only a mere imputation and they look for something more intrinsically existing. Through this they arrive at the idea that the universal mind-basis is an example for the person. They feel the need to posit something more intrinsically existing. They feel it's not sufficient for the person to be just a mere imputation since the person creates karma and the person experiences the various effects of karma. Therefore they say that the person is not suitable to be just a mere imputation and that there needs to be something more. So they posit the universal mind-basis.

One can say that at the time of analysis they find the imputed meaning that is searched for, because they find the universal mind-basis. The reason the Mind Only accept the universal mind-basis is inherent existence.

Chandrakirti asserts the merely labelled person as the basis that creates karma and also experiences karma. Therefore there is no need for the acceptance of a universal mind-basis as the foundation for the creation and experience of karmic causes and effects.

You can see that here the question of whether or not the universal mind foundation exists revolves about the question of inherent existence.

2. No Self-knower

Likewise here the acceptance or non-acceptance of a self-knower also revolves around inherent existence.

I have already explained this before, but how do the **Mind Only**, for example, arrive at the idea of self-knower? It is because they think that the object possessor, the consciousness, establishes the object, but there's nothing that establishes the existence of the object possessor. Therefore they say that the object possessor, the clear and knowing has two parts,

- one part that establishes the object,
- a part that establishes the consciousness, the object possessor, itself.

In the **Prasangika** system that is not necessary, as the object possessor is established through the object.

But here the **Mind Only** feel the need to have a self-knower that establishes existence of the object possessor. One part of the clear knowing arises in the aspect of the outer object, while the other aspect of the clear and knowing arises only in the aspect of the object possessor itself. It doesn't arise in the aspect of any outer object, and therefore it is referred to as the self-knower.

The self-knower is a solitary knower that is turned only inwards. It doesn't arise in the aspect of any outer object. It is

solitary from the point of view that it doesn't have any entourage - it doesn't have another consciousness with which it is concomitant. So it is not a primary consciousness, because then it would have to have an entourage of various mental factors, and it is also not a mental factor because then it would have to be concomitant with another primary consciousness. As it is neither it is referred to as a solitary knower.

The **Mind Only** are not able to recognise the mutual relationship between subject or object- possessor and object. That is, they don't recognise that the object is established relative to the object possessor, and likewise the object possessor is established relative to the object. Because they don't recognise that mutual relativity they therefore feel the need to assess an intrinsically existing self-knower that is attached to the object possessor, which can then establish the existence of that object possessor.

In the **Prasangika** system there is no need for the existence of an additional self-knower, because according to Prasangika system the object possessor is established relative to the recognition of the object. For example, through the mere recognition that there's an object there will also naturally be the perception of an object possessor, e.g. thinking, 'Oh, I recognise such and such an object'. However those that assert a self-knower say that this recognition of the object possessor, the recognition of 'I saw such and such an object', or 'I am seeing such and such an object', will not come about without the presence of a self-knower. For example, in the Prasangika system in conjunction with the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, just merely by seeing blue then there will also the perception of 'I'm seeing blue'. The object-possessor is established through the object.

Those **systems that assert a self-knower** say that in order to be able to recognise that there is an object possessor that sees blue, there needs to be a self-knower that recognises the object possessor. But we will go into that in more detail further on.

Those asserting a self-knower use various analogies such as saying that a self-knower is needed because otherwise a mind cannot know itself. For example a sharp sword cannot cut itself no matter the sharp the edge of the sword, or nor can a light illuminate itself no matter how bright the light is. They use these various types of analogies in order to show the point that consciousness just by itself cannot know itself. Therefore according to them an additional type of consciousness called the self-knower is needed.

The **Prasangika** say that those tenet holders are not able to recognise that the object possessor is established relative to the object. **Those asserting a self-knower** don't recognise the interdependent origination between the object possessor and the object, and they're not able to establish that the object possessor exists relative to the object. Rather they assert an intrinsically existing object possessor that establishes the object, and because they assert this intrinsically existing object possessor they can't see that the object possessor exists relative to the object. Therefore they also feel the need for an intrinsically existing self-knower.

3. Non-inherent three modes

Next comes the belief that inferential cognisors are generated in dependence upon an inherently or intrinsically existing reason. Again this belief is based upon the acceptance of self-characterised or inherently existent phenomena. An intrinsically existing reason means intrinsically existing three modes. The **Mind Only** say that in order to generate a valid inferential cognisor one needs to have these inherently existing three modes. The thesis is proved in dependence upon three modes that exist from their own side.

Chandrakirti says that in order for the thesis to be proved one

doesn't need three modes that exist from their own side. In order for a reason that is the three modes to establish the thesis it is not necessary for those three modes to exist from their own side. This is because by just nominally existing those three modes can generate an understanding of the thesis in the opponent's mind. The inferential cognisor is generated in the mind of the opponent through their recognition, and through different types of nominal three modes such as the reason of renown and so forth.

4. Outer Existence

The **Prasangika** assert the existence of outer objects based on a lack of intrinsic existence. They say that what is contained within a being's continuum is inner existence, and what is not contained within a beings continuum is outer existence. The Prasangika say that by not positing outer existence it becomes difficult to distinguish between what is contained within a being's continuum and what is not contained within a being's continuum. It also contradicts worldly convention.

The way the **Mind Only** negate outer existence is by negating the outer existence that is based on an aggregation of a partless particles. They say that there is no existence of outer objects that is made up out of partless particles. Rather the object comes into existence through the internal mental substance, and therefore all objects are of one nature with the mind. So the refutation of outer existence by the Mind Only again centres on their belief in inherent existence.

The **Prasangika** say that those objects that are not contained within a person's continuum can be nominally labelled as outer objects, just merely by not being contained within a being's continuum. The Prasangika assert the nominal existence of outer objects. They say just merely by being not contained within a person's continuum then nominally that object will be an outer object, and since it is only nominally an outer object it lacks intrinsic existence.

5. Hearers and Self-Liberators Realise the Selflessness Of Phenomena

Why do the **Sautrantika** assert that hearers and solitary realisers don't need to realise the selflessness of person in order to attain liberation? It is because they say that one can attain liberation through merely abandoning the grasping at the person as being a self-sufficient substantial existent. They say that in order to reach the path of seeing one doesn't need to realise the selflessness of phenomena. Why? Because it is sufficient to realise directly the absence of the person that is a self-sufficient substantially existent in order to reach the path of seeing.

The **Prasangika** say that the grasping at the person as being a self-sufficient substantially existent is only a coarse self-grasping, and that there is a more subtle self-grasping, which is the grasping at the person as inherently existent, that is at the root of the afflictions. Therefore one needs to realise the lack of inherent existence in order to reach the path of seeing. So again it all centres around the acceptance and non-acceptance of inherent existence.

In the Prasangika system the grasping at an inherently existing person is the subtle self-grasping at person. The person lacks inherent existence, hence the grasping at an inherently existent person is the self-grasping at a person. In order to attain the enlightenment of a hearer or solitary realiser one needs to abandon the self-grasping at person, so therefore one needs to abandon the grasping at an inherently existent person. That's why the Prasangika assert that hearers and solitary realisers need to realise the lack of inherent existence in order to attain their enlightenment - because they need to abandon the self-grasping at person. The self-grasping at person is the grasping

at an inherently existent person that can only be abandoned by realising that the person lacks inherent existence. Through that reasoning they assert that, in order to attain their enlightenment, hearers and solitary realisers need to realise both the selflessness of person, as well as the selflessness of phenomena. Again the whole reasoning centres on the Prasangikas' belief of lack of inherent existence.

Student Questions

Student: Do the Madhyamika have the right view?

If the Prasangika don't have it then who does?

Student: So the Madhyamika and the Prasangika are the same then?

Yes.

Student: Isn't a Madhyamika someone with non-dual awareness?

If they have non-dual awareness then that is the correct view of emptiness.

Student: What is the nature of the karmic seed? Is it consciousness? If it is stored on the consciousness I am curious as to its exact nature. It seems to be formless yet it produces a form.

The nature of the karmic potential is its potential to produce a result – a happy result if it is virtuous karma and an unhappy result if it is non-virtuous karma. With regard to the second part of your question there is no problem with that.

Student: I am trying to intellectually capture the vast nature of karmic potential.

Flower seeds produce a variety of colours. The seed isn't coloured yet has the potential to produce those colours. Likewise the karmic potential on the mindstream doesn't have a body but can produce a big form. The body doesn't have other big bodies inside it, but it has the potential.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama once remarked that it is very peculiar that when our form starts with the fertilised ovum it doesn't have the characteristics of two eyes, a nose and a mouth like the adult body. These features develop later. Karma acts as a concurrently conducive condition for a particular form to be shaped. When a consciousness enters a fertilised egg, all kinds of things can develop.

Student: What about cloning where they take a piece of one body and create a new being?

That's something that they are investigating. In Buddhist texts there is mention of many different types of birth. There is no necessity to be born as an egg in a womb. For example in a miraculous birth in the godly realms a father and mother are not necessary. Also when you split open rocks you can find animals inside the rock. So again there is no need for the substance of father and mother. The view that one needs to have a father and mother is a scientific point of view, not a Buddhist view. Westerners don't accept miraculous birth and birth from heat.

Student: They did in the Middle Ages.

Maybe they were more together in medieval times then. They were more truthful in those days. These days there is more deception and trickery.

It's important to know the nature of awareness and the effect of consciousness. That's why brothers and sisters can be so different.

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Edited Version

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