
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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Generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment in order to be able to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings. For that purpose I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I'm going to put it into practice as much as possible.'

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.5.2.1. No Need to Accept a Universal Mind Basis if One Doesn't Assert Inherent Existence (cont.)

Eight Uncommon Characteristics of the Prasangika

Last time we started to talk about the eight uncommon characteristics of the Prasangika system. We mentioned five of them, and three are left.

6. Self-Grasping at Phenomena as an Affliction

According to the **Prasangika** system hearer and solitary realiser arhats need to realise the selflessness of phenomena in addition to the selflessness of person. This is so because in the Prasangika system there is no difference in the subtly of the object of negation. Grasping at the person as inherently existent is self-grasping at the person, and grasping at phenomena as inherently existent is self-grasping at phenomena. The person's lack of inherent existence is the selflessness of person, and phenomena's lack of inherent existence is the selflessness of phenomena. There is no difference in the subtly of the object of negation.

All four tenets agree that in order to reach the path of seeing one needs to fully realise the selflessness of person. Since the grasping at the person as inherently existent is the self-grasping at person, then in order to realise the selflessness of person one needs to realise that the person lacks inherent existence. As there is no difference in the Prasangika system in the subtly of the object of negation (i.e. between selflessness of person and selflessness of phenomena), then an arya also realises the selflessness of phenomena.

In order to attain the state of an arhat one needs to overcome the afflictive obscurations, which are the mental afflictions and their seeds. Here that is primarily self-grasping. That's why in order to attain liberation one needs to overcome the afflictive obscurations, and in order to get rid of the afflictive obscurations one needs to get rid of self-grasping, which is the grasping at the inherently existent person and phenomena. That's why an arhat needs to have realised the selflessness of phenomena.

All the tenets agree that the self-grasping at person is an afflictive obscuration. However the **lower tenets** posit grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantially existent as self-grasping at person. The **Prasangika** posit a more subtle type of grasping as the

self-grasping at person. The Prasangika say that grasping at the person as inherently existent is self-grasping at person. Then by having established that the grasping at the person as inherently existent is self-grasping at person, one has already established that grasping at an inherently existent person is an afflictive obscuration.

Since there is no difference in subtly between the selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena, it is not really possible to only realise the selflessness of person, and not realise the selflessness of phenomena as well. Therefore arhats have to realise both the selflessness of person as well as selflessness of phenomena.

We previously mentioned that there is no difference in subtly between the two selflessnesses, but that there is a difference in the grade of difficulty with which they are realised. Even though there is no difference in subtly, the selflessness of person is easier to understand than the selflessness of phenomena.

7. Disintegrated is a Functionality

In his presentation of the eight difficult points of the Prasangika, Gyaltsab Rinpoche posits the lack of inherent existence and the impossibility of understanding self characteristics as the seventh point.

As the eighth difficult point he posits that a buddha's comprehension of the world of multiplicity is unmistakable. There's a significance in positing this as a difficult subtle point of the Prasangika, because there are some people who assert that that the world of multiplicity can only be comprehended by a mistaken awareness. So Gyaltsab Rinpoche says that it is one of the difficult points of the Prasangika system that the enlightened consciousness of a buddha can unmistakably comprehend the world of multiplicity. That's according to the presentation of Gyaltsab Rinpoche's eight difficult points of the Prasangika.

As we have already said, in actuality there are many uncommon difficult features of the **Prasangika** system, and hence the eight uncommon features are sometimes presented in different ways. According to the presentation we follow, the seventh uncommon feature of the Prasangika system is that disintegrated is a functionality.

It is an uncommon feature of the Prasangika system to assert that action and activity are still possible despite a lack of inherent existence. All the eight uncommon features of the Prasangika system actually stem from the reason of lack of inherent existence. As we said before the acceptance of outer objects is not an uncommon feature of the Prasangika system, but the assertion of outer objects on the basis of the reasoning that everything lacks inherent existence is an uncommon feature of the Prasangika system.

There are tenets that do realise that there are outer objects, but they're not able to realise that those outer objects lack inherent existence. Likewise there are tenets that also understand that there is no universal mind-basis, but they are not able to comprehend that this absence of a universal mind-basis lacks inherent

existence. When these uncommon features of the Prasangika system are presented according to the presentation we are using, then it is understood that it is always on the basis of a lack of inherent existence. Those eight uncommon features are asserted by taking the lack of inherent existence as the reason. Therefore the lack of inherent existence by itself is not posited as a separate uncommon feature since it is already implicitly included in each of the eight.

The seventh uncommon feature is that disintegrated is a functionality and arising from that is the eighth uncommon feature, the Prasangika's uncommon presentation of the three times.

Here we have a presentation of the three times according to each of the tenets - how the Vaibashika assert the three times to be substantially existent, and then according to the other tenets.

Three times according to Vaibashika

Within the **Vaibashika** system there are different schools that have their own individual presentation of the three times: those asserting changing into another functionality, those asserting changing into another characteristic, those asserting changing into another occasion, and those asserting changing from one to the other.

Those Asserting Changing Into Another Functionality

The teacher asserting the first school is called Lobon Cho-chup. He asserts that when a functionality such as a seed changes into a sprout, i.e. when the future becomes the present, then at that time there is no change in substance even though there is a change in object. For example when the sprout passes through the three stages, from future to present to past, there is no change in the sprout's identity. It remains constant. In order to support his point of view he uses the analogy of milk turning into curd. Even though there is a change in shape and a change in taste, there's no change in colour. The milk is still actually there, and there has been not really been any change in identity or in substance.

This is very similar to a Hindu tenet that says that there's a constant identity that goes throughout the different times, which is not really correct.

Those Asserting Changing Into Another Characteristic

The proponent of the second system is called Lobon Yongdrup, who actually gives a definition for each of the three times. He relates the three times to the strength of the object, and in order to clarify that he uses the analogy of a man who has changed in his attachment from one woman to another. At the time when the man becomes very strongly attached to a new woman his attachment to the previous one hasn't completely gone away. It is still there but it is less.

This tenet has mixed up the three times and is deluded.

Those Asserting Changing Into Another Occasion

The third proponent is called Lobon Yeshe. It's good to just know that the Vaibashikas have different views of the three times by. This presentation is a bit closer to actuality. Lobon Yeshe says that there are actually three sprouts, one sprout that was generated in the past,

one sprout that is generated in the present, and one sprout that will be generated in the future.

In order to clarify this he uses the analogy of a pill that is being used as a marker on a scale. When the pill is placed on the one hundred mark we say we have one hundred. When then another pill is placed on the one thousand mark we say we have one thousand. And when still another pill is placed on the ten thousand mark we say we have ten thousand. Similarly we have one sprout in the future, one in the present and one in the past.

This system is incorrect because if we already have a sprout, and a sprout is generated that is of different nature from that sprout, then it becomes difficult to say when the sprout is generated, and when it isn't generated. That's a fault if they are of a different nature. If they are of one nature then it becomes difficult for them to perform actions and activities.

Those Asserting Changing From One To The Other

The proponent of the fourth system is called Jampa Senge-la. His definition is in relation to oneself. What is earlier than oneself is the future, what is later with regard to oneself is the past and the nature of oneself is the present. He uses the analogy of a girl. In relation to her own mother she is a daughter, but in relation to her own daughter, she is the mother. This system is incorrect because it has the fallacy that one time would actually become the three times.

Sautrantika, Mind Only and Svatantrika-Madhyamaka

The Sautrantika, the Mind Only and the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka all have the same definition for the future, present and past.

They say that a functionality is the **future** when, even though there is a cause for the generation of that functionality, it hasn't generated yet because of a lack of certain conducive conditions needed for the generation. Even though in general the cause is there for that functionality to be generated, if, because of a lack of conducive conditions, that functionality hasn't been generated yet, then that functionality is regarded as the future.

What is regarded as **past** is that which has disintegrated in the next moment after having been generated.

The **present** is a functionality that has been generated and that has not yet disintegrated.

The Sautrantika, the Mind Only and Svatantrika-Madhyamaka say that only the present is a functionality. As the future and the past are empty of being able to perform a function they are a non-functionality. So you can see that the Sautrantika, the Mind Only and Svatantrika-Madhyamaka don't posit the future and the past as functionalities. The Prasangika-Madhyamaka posits that disintegrated is a functionality. So that's where there is a difference.

The reason why those three lower tenets assert that the future is a non-functionality is because they say it's a non-affirming negation. Why? Because, for example, if you say, 'Did the earlier sprout exist?' then the earlier

sprout existed. However, the earlier sprout changed into something else, and so what one is then left with is just the absence of that earlier sprout. Therefore it is a non-affirming negation, which is a non-functionality.

They say in order for something to be a functionality the imputed meaning has to be findable when it is looked for under investigation. However if we investigate the earlier sprout there's really nothing findable anymore, because the earlier sprout has already changed into something else. So there is nothing findable under investigation and hence it cannot be a functionality. Here one can see that they make this link between being a functionality, and having an intrinsic existence or being findable at the time of investigation.

8. The Uncommon Presentation of the Three Times

Initially one has to understand that the disintegrated sprout is a functionality. Once one has understood that, then one arrives at the uncommon presentation of the three times more easily.

The **lower tenets** say that when the earlier sprout has changed into something else then one is left with is the mere absence of the earlier sprout. This mere absence of the earlier sprout, the mere reversal of the earlier sprout, is what they say is a non-affirming negation. However the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** make the case that the disintegration of the earlier sprout is an affirming negation.

The **lower tenets** posit the non-existence of the earlier sprout as the disintegrated sprout, and the mere non-existence of the earlier sprout as a non-affirming negation.

The **Prasangika** say the mere absence of the earlier sprout is the basis of imputation. It is not the disintegrated sprout, but the basis of imputation for the disintegrated sprout, and then on that basis for imputation (the mere absence of the earlier sprout) the functionality of disintegrated sprout is imputed.

So the **Prasangika** say the disintegrated sprout is not a non-affirming negation but an affirming negation. Why? Because implicit in the statement 'disintegrated sprout', is that something has caused the disintegration of the sprout. Since the statement 'disintegrated sprout' also states implicitly 'being generated from the sprout', the statement 'disintegrated sprout' is an affirming negation. Disintegrated sprout is an affirming negation because the statement 'disintegrated sprout' also implicitly states being generated from sprout. Since it actually asserts an affirmative phenomenon implicitly it's not just a mere negation but it becomes an affirming negation.

The disintegrated sprout is an affirming negation rather than a non-affirming negation. Why? Because the statement 'disintegrated sprout' actually asserts an affirmative phenomenon, the cause of the disintegrated sprout. Therefore, since it doesn't just negate something, but also implicitly asserts an affirmative in place of the negation, it is an affirming negation and not a non-affirming negation.

So do you understand that a little bit? If you do then that's good.

The **Prasangika** say that the disintegrated sprout is a affirming negation because the statement 'disintegrated sprout' implicitly affirms the cause of the disintegrated sprout.

When we talk about disintegrated being a functionality, what we also have to talk about is disintegrated karma being a functionality.

First some definitions. Here the presentation of the three times is done in relation to a generation, abiding, and cessation. The generation is the future, the abiding is the present, and the cessation is the past.

The definition of the past is *that which has disintegrated after the complete generation of another functionality.*

Disintegrated sprout, past sprout, and destructed sprout are synonymous.

The definition of the future is *the temporary non-generation of another functionality despite the presence of a cause, because the conducive conditions are incomplete.*

The definition of the present is *that which has been completely generated and has not yet disintegrated, and for which, and in order for its mental image to appear to our mind, the mental image or the meaning generality of the future and the past are not necessary to appear to our mind.*

For example the past is the disintegrated sprout in the second moment after its complete generation in dependence upon causes and conditions. An example for the future is the temporary non-generation of the sprout because of the lack of certain conducive conditions, even though the cause for the generation of the sprout is present. At certain times such as winter the cause for the generation of the sprout can be present, but because of the lack of certain conducive conditions we have a non-generation of the sprout. Because of the lack of certain conducive conditions the sprout does not generate despite the presence of the cause, such as in wintertime. An example for the present is the sprout that has been generated and that hasn't disintegrated.

This definition of the three times and these examples of the three times are agreed upon by the **Sautrantika**, the **Mind Only** and **Svatantrika-Madhyamika**. The **Vaibashikas** have their own ideas, so they don't agree. Although the **Sautrantika**, the **Mind Only** and **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** agree with these definitions and also with the examples, they disagree with positing the future and the past as functionalities.

Summary

The **three lower tenets** said that the disintegrated sprout is a non-affirming negation i.e. that the disintegrated sprout is the mere absence of the earlier sprout and therefore is a non-affirming negation. However the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** say that the disintegrated sprout is an affirming negation because the statement 'disintegrated sprout' implicitly asserts the cause of the disintegrated sprout, or being generated from sprout. So 'disintegrated sprout' becomes an affirming negation and therefore it can be a functionality.

Also the **three lower tenets** assert that the three times exist from their own side, which the **Prasangika** don't.

The **Prasangika** say that disintegrated is a functionality. Why? Because disintegrated actually comes from generated. So generated is the cause for disintegrated. Therefore disintegrated arises from generated, and therefore it is a functionality.

We can relate this back to the root verse.

*Because it doesn't disintegrate inherently
It is able even though there is no mind-basis.
Though it has been long for some since karma's
disintegration
One should understand that unfailingly a result
would arise.*

This verse from the root text is answer by the **Prasangika** to a debate that originates from non-Buddhists. Here a cause can have a result or an effect, even though neither exists inherently.

There's a statement in the sutras where it says that, for those who possess bodies, the potential of karma does not become exhausted even over many eons, and will definitely have a ripening result when the causes and conditions come together. This statement is something that is accepted literally by all the tenets, but they all have their own idea of how it happens. Regarding this Buddhist assertion of the functionality of karma even over long periods of time non-Buddhists ask the Buddhists two questions, '1. Does the virtuous and non-virtuous karma abide until it produces its fruit or its effect, or 2. Does the karma disintegrate in its second moment?' This is also something we also need to think about.

They go on to say that if the karma abided until it actually produces fruit, then that would mean that that karma is permanent. If it is the case that the virtuous and non-virtuous karma abides from the moment of its generation up until it actually generates a result, then that would mean that the karma is permanent.

In the second case, if you say that the karma disintegrates in the second moment after its generation, then in the second moment after its generation the karma has already disintegrated. It has become the past, and something that is disintegrated is not a functionality and can't give rise to an effect. So there would be no effect. That's what the non-Buddhists say, and each tenet has their own reply for the non-Buddhist.

This debate is mentioned in *Root Wisdom* by Nagarjuna. To repeat those two debate points again, they are,

- If the karma abided from the moment of its generation up until it produces a fruit then that would mean it is permanent.
- If it disintegrated in the second moment after its generation, then it would become non-existent, and so a non-functionality.

We now need to go to the answers to those points. First the answers of the **lower tenets**.

Even though the karma disintegrates in the second moment after its generation, there is no fault that it couldn't generate an effect. Why? Because even though the karma disintegrates in the second moment after its

generation, there is a basis upon which the potential of that karma is placed. Because there is a basis on which the potential of the karma is planted, therefore there is no fault if the karma disintegrates in the second moment after its generation. Because there is a basis upon which the potential of the karma can be placed, it doesn't matter if the karma disintegrates in the second moment after its generation, it can still produce an effect.

A certain segment of the Kashmiri Vaibashika and the Sautrantika Following Scripture, the Mind Only Following Insight, and the Svatantrika-Madhyamika, assert the continuum of the mental consciousness as the basis for the karmic potential. That's why, according to them, there's no fault if the karma disintegrates in the second moment of its generation, because the potential can continue on the continuum of the mental consciousness.

Then there's another segment of the Kashmiri Vaibashika that assert that after the disintegration of karma there is what they call the 'attainment of karma' (according to them a non-associated compounded phenomenon other than the two karmas) and that's why they say that karma can produce an effect even though it disintegrates the second moment after its generation.

Then there is also another segment that assert an inexhaustibility of karma other in nature from the two karmas.

The Mind Only Following Scripture assert the universal mind-basis as the basis for the continuation of the karmic potential.

Those tenets have these various reasons for asserting either the universal mind foundation, or asserting the continuity of the mental consciousness, or asserting the inexhaustibility of karma, or the attainment of karma as the reason for the ability of karma to produce an effect even though it ceased a long time ago.

Those tenets all assert inherent existence, so they all assert that the imputed meaning can be found at the time of investigation. They say that if we investigate the basis of the karmic potential then, according to their own system, one either finds each the continuity of the mental consciousness, or the universal mind basis, and so on. It is all based on the belief of inherent existence.

In order to refute all those views then Chandrakirti wrote this verse saying,

*Because it doesn't disintegrate inherently
It is able even though there is no mind-basis.*

and so forth.

We can go into more detail next time about exactly how Chandrakirti refutes those lower tenets in this verse.

Edited Version
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