
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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། དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པོ། །

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As usual generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. In order to be able to do so I'm 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. The Quality of Affirming a Cause and Effect Relationship (cont.)

Last time we reached the outline giving an analogy of how an effect can arise from karma that disintegrates non-inherently. The third outline belonging to that section is,

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.5.2.3. Refuting Objections

Here the Realists posit two objections to an effect arising from karma that disintegrates non-inherently. Firstly the objection that the generation of fruitional effects would become endless should an effect arise from karma that disintegrates non-inherently. Secondly they posit the objection that what the Prasangika say contradicts the scriptures that teach the existence of a universal mind basis.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.5.2.3.1. Refuting that the Generation of Fruitional Effects Would Become Endless

Firstly we come to the objection that the generation of fruitional effects would become endless if an effect arises from karma that disintegrates non-inherently. The **Realists** posit their objection saying, 'If you assert that a fruitional effect can arise from a karma that is not generated intrinsically, and which is also not used up intrinsically, then there would arise the fault that even though fruitional effect has arisen, further fruitional effects would arise, and in such a way it would become endless'. The Realists of course assert that karma is generated intrinsically or inherently, and they also say that it is used up intrinsically or inherently.

The **Prasangika** say exactly the opposite. They say that the karma is neither generated inherently nor is it used up inherently. But within that view the **Realists** see the fallacy of limitless fruitional effects.

Although the objects are alike in not being merely existent

Those with floaters see only the aspect of falling hairs

And no aspect of another object. Likewise, One should understand, that the matured doesn't ripen again.

Therefore one sees that non-virtuous fruits come from black karma and virtuous fruits only from virtue.

Those with awareness lacking virtue and non-

virtue become liberated.

We are cautioned to stop analysing cause and effect.

The **Prasangika** refute the existence of such a fault in their view with another analogy saying, '*the objects are alike in not being merely existent, etc*'.

The meaning objects refers here to the karma that has not yet produced an effect and the karma that has already produced a ripening effect. According to the Prasangika karma that has already produced a ripening effect, and karma that has not yet produced a ripening effect, are alike in not being inherently existent. In the analogy 'the objects' refers to the falling hairs seen by someone with defective eye faculty, and other non-existent objects such as the horns of a rabbit, and so forth.

First of all it has to be clear that the falling hairs, the horns of a rabbit, the son of an infertile woman and so forth, are all alike in being non-existent objects. However even though all three are alike in being non-existent objects, someone with floaters will only see the falling hairs, and will not perceive other non-existent objects such as the horns of a rabbit, or the son of a barren woman child of an infertile woman.

This analogy is used to show that a ripening effect can arise from karma that has not yet produced a ripening effect, but that doesn't mean that a ripening effect has to arise from a karma that has already produced a ripening effect. A fruitional effect can arise from karma that has not yet ripened, however there's no necessity for a karma to ripen again once it has already ripened. It is just as in the analogy where the defective eye-consciousness sees the falling hairs, but not necessarily other non-existent objects.

Like the analogy, even though both karmas are alike in existing non-inherently, fruits can arise from those that have not yet produced a fruitional effect, while no further fruition will occur from those that have already produced a fruitional effect.

Further, just as the example establishes that karma will definitely produce its effect, it also shows that from virtuous and non-virtuous karma then respectively a desirable, pleasant result and an undesirable, unpleasant result will arise. Just as the eye-consciousness that perceives the falling hairs definitely won't see the horns of a rabbit, likewise a pleasant, desirable fruitional effect will not arise from non-virtuous karma, and an undesirable unpleasant fruitional effect will not arise from virtue.

I think that is clear. The eye-consciousness that perceives falling hairs doesn't see other non-existent objects such as the horns of a rabbit, and so forth. What that distorted eye-consciousness sees is quite definite. Similarly it is quite definite which karma produces which effect. It is definite that non-virtuous undesirable unpleasant fruits come only from black non-virtuous karma, while desirable pleasant fruits arise only from virtue.

Therefore one sees that non-virtuous fruits come from black karma. Non-virtuous fruits refers to unpleasant fruits, which arise from black karma. Virtuous fruits refers to pleasant desirable fruits that arise only from

virtue. One can see that they arise respectively.

Those with awareness lacking virtue and non-virtue become liberated means those with an awareness that realises virtue and non-virtue don't exist intrinsically become liberated, because true grasping is the root of cyclic existence.

Regarding the line, ***We are cautioned to stop analysing cause and effect***, the Buddha explained the characteristics of karma, that from such karma such a result with such characteristics will arise; and from that karma with those characteristics then that effect with these types of characteristics will arise; the Buddha explained this to ordinary individuals with valid reasoning.

However, the Buddha said to ordinary individuals who are engaged in analysis of the characteristics of karma with valid reasoning alone, that without scriptural sources the ripening of karma is beyond comprehension. The Buddha said this because by investigating karma without scriptural sources there is the danger that one could start to negate and deny karma, and deny conventional existence. Therefore in order to avoid that danger the Buddha said to those ordinary individuals that the ripening of karma is beyond comprehension and therefore one is cautioned to stop analysing cause and effect without relying on scriptural reference.

As we have said previously, karma is a very subtle phenomenon, which is very difficult to comprehend without scriptural sources. It is very difficult to comprehend karma as a whole just by relying upon what is called valid reasoning. Therefore the Buddha said that the ripening of karma is beyond imagination. So one needs to have valid scriptural sources in order to really comprehend karma.

One comes to understand that one needs to ascertain the law of cause and effect through various avenues, and one needs to take care one doesn't fall into the danger of actually starting to doubt the law of cause and effect by thinking about it from different points of view.

The view that realises emptiness should become a support for the previously mentioned ascertainment. In such a way one should endeavour to not leave empty-handed from the continent where there are many jewels. The view of realising emptiness should facilitate the previously mentioned ascertainment that effects arise from causes, because when one realises the view of emptiness then one realises the lack of total independence.

By realising the lack of total independence one implicitly understands interdependence, and by generating an understanding of interdependence then one also generates an understanding that phenomena arise in dependence upon an accumulation of causes and conditions. So understanding emptiness should give rise to an understanding that effects arise from an accumulation of causes and conditions, and vice versa.

By understanding how effects arise in dependence upon an accumulation of causes and conditions, then implicitly one should generate an understanding that total independence is non-existent. In such a way the view of emptiness should facilitate an understanding of karma.

Then in such a way one should endeavour not to leave the country where there are many jewels empty-handed.

We are like a person who has arrived in a country where there are many jewels lying around everywhere. It is up to oneself to make use of that opportunity now to prevent oneself from going into the lower realms in a future life, or to generate the causes for liberation and enlightenment. So one can generate the causes for happy future rebirth - it is up to oneself to make use of that opportunity.

One has the opportunity to generate the causes for future happiness and to avoid future suffering, and one can also relate this to the purpose of this life - being able to be happy while walking, sitting, sleeping, or lying down.

When one is unhappy in this life there's something that one can do about it. One should investigate the causes for happiness and the causes for suffering, and one shouldn't act in a way that will cause one to receive a loss. If one lies around and doesn't make use of opportunities, and returns empty-handed, then one could be called quite foolish.

Likewise with a businessperson going somewhere on business with lots of precious jewels and money, but then returning home not only empty-handed but with lots of debts on top of that. That would also be called quite foolish and unskilful. If we have come into this good life with a store of virtuous karma left over, and all we do in this life is to use up that virtuous karma and accumulate more and more non-virtuous karma, then we would be exactly like that unskilful businessperson. One should try to avoid being like that.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.5.2.3.2. Refuting that it would be contradictory to scriptures teaching the existence of the universal mind basis

This has two sub-outlines: actual - giving the actual words that refute the objections that would be contradictory to the scriptures; and giving the example of why it was explained like that in the sutras.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.5.2.3.2.1. Actual - Giving the Actual Words That Refute the Objections That Would Be Contradictory to the Scriptures¹

The **Realists** say to the **Prasangika**, 'What you teach is contradictory to the sutras teaching that the law of cause and effect functions on the basis of a universal mind foundation'.

In case the Realists posit such an objection the **Prasangika** say that there is no such contradiction because the teachings that a universal basis apart from the six consciousnesses exists, the teaching that the person exists as a substantial existent, and the teaching that aggregates exist only as such, inherently, were taught with those in mind who wouldn't understand the extremely profound meaning of these topics. As it says in the root verse,

***It is taught that the universal basis exists, that
The person exists, that the aggregates exist only as
such.***

¹ In *Mirror* this is summarised as Actual. The additional wording of the heading is from *Illumination*.

*These teachings are for those who
Wouldn't understand the extremely profound
meaning.*

Those sutras are called 'sutras with intent'.

Sutras With Intent

These types of teachings are called teachings with intent. Why? Because the disciples who assert universal mind foundation, those who assert that a person is a self-sufficient substantial existent, and those who assert that the aggregates exist truly, are not yet ready to be taught the extremely profound. They have to be guided to an understanding of the extremely profound slowly, slowly, in a step-by-step manner. Because they are not ready yet to be taught the most profound at that time, the Buddha taught them about universal mind foundation, about self-sufficient substantially existent self, and about truly existent aggregates, and those teachings are called teachings with a hidden intent.

Those teachings were given by the Buddha for a purpose, in accordance with the view of the disciples. Because the disciples accepted a universal mind foundation, true existence, and so forth, the Buddha gave those teachings in accordance with their minds. The hidden intent within those sutras is the intention of leading those disciples to an understanding that all phenomena lack intrinsic existence. Having this lack of intrinsic existence in mind, and wanting ultimately to lead the disciples to an understanding of the lack of intrinsic existence of all phenomena, the Buddha gave those teachings to these disciples.

Even though the Buddha was verbally referring to the universal mind foundation, what he was actually referring to was the lack of inherent existence of phenomena. He taught according to the level of the disciples minds at the time, so he verbally referred to the universal mind foundation, but in meaning he was talking about the lack of intrinsic existence of phenomena.

Because the lack of inherent existence of phenomena can be found for all phenomena, he talked about the universal mind foundation being the basis for karma and for karmic fruits, but even though he talked about the universal mind foundation what he had in mind was the lack of inherent existence of phenomena. For the purpose of conveying an understanding of the law of cause and effect he talked about the universal mind foundation, and also for the same reason he talked about a person being a substantially existent. He talked about the existence of those phenomena in order to be able to subdue and teach those disciples then.

Illumination:

In a sutra the Buddha said, 'O bhikku, the five aggregates are like the baggage and the person is that which carries the baggage.'

For those disciples who accept the person as a self-sufficient substantial existent the Buddha found it more beneficial to actually talk about a self-sufficient substantial existent person. Therefore to this bhikku he said the five aggregates are like baggage and the person is that which carries that baggage. So here he was talking

about the person as being a self-sufficient substantial existent.

Even though those words don't explicitly talk about the person being a self-sufficient substantially existent that is the meaning that is to be understood. Likewise to other disciples the Buddha talked about the lack of a person that is a self-sufficient substantial existent, however he still referred to the aggregates as being a substantial existent. He talked also about a mind and a consciousness and so forth in such a manner in order for the disciples to generate an enduring faith, and to continuously practise morality and so forth. In such a way they would be able to improve and later attain a higher status.

In order to facilitate the Dharma practice of those who grasp at true existence, when the Buddha taught them about mind, consciousness, the five aggregates, and so forth, he didn't refute the true existence of those phenomena. However, just by merely talking about the five aggregates, mind, consciousness, and so forth, without refuting the true existence of those phenomena, to the minds of those who grasp at true existence, it seems as if the Buddha was talking about truly existent aggregates, truly existent mind, and truly existent consciousness. The reason why the Buddha did that, and allowed that to happen, was to facilitate the practice of faith, morality, and so forth of those disciples, in order for them to be able to attain higher status in the next life, and then ultimately to attain enlightenment and liberation. Even though he refuted the person as being a self-sufficient substantially existent, he still allowed the disciples to believe in truly existent aggregates, consciousness, mind, mental continuum, and so forth, in order to facilitate their practice of faith, morality, and so forth.

So for all those various reasons the Buddha taught that the universal mind foundation exists, and that a person is self-sufficient substantial existent, and he also taught that the aggregates are truly existent and so forth. All those teachings by the Buddha are for those who cannot immediately understand the most profound aspects of the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha taught in that way for a purpose with a certain intent in mind.

Those disciples who have meditated for a long time on non-Buddhist views are therefore unable to immediately understand the profound emptiness. As it says in *The Precious Garland of Madhyamika*,

The self is non-existent and it won't come into existence;

That belonging to the self doesn't exist, won't come into existence.

The childish who hear those words become afraid.

Therefore for those who become afraid when they initially are shown profound emptiness, the Buddha did not explicitly mention this topic in order to avoid having those disciples fall into the extreme of nihilism. We need talk a little bit more about this in the next class.

So did you get all of that?

Addendum

Which of the three types of feeling is the taste of the tea?

Student: Happiness

If that is so then you have to experience happiness and not suffering. So you have to experience physical happiness, which is induced by the mental happiness.

If we drink tea after on a full stomach is that a feeling of happiness or suffering?

[student answer unclear]

If you eat too much food then you get a stomach-ache even though the food is delicious.

Drinking good tea should induce physical and mental happiness. If you drink tea with a very pure view, thinking it's very good and, 'Ah that's very nice', then that experience is the result of a virtuous karma. It is also good that one creates some virtue while drinking the tea.

There are many people who die because of a lack of tea, let alone those who die from a lack of water. So it's very good to be aware of that, and take that understanding. For example, if you look at another person we can understand a lot about them just by looking at them.

By thinking in such a way then the mind will become happy.

One should always think that one has all the conducive conditions, and then one won't be disturbed by discontent. There are some who become depressed because they think, 'Even though I have all good material conditions I don't have any friends'. It's not really like that because there are also many people who are quite happy without any friends. We say that monks have one mouth and one stomach. There's a moral in that!

Maybe we can leave it here for tonight.

Do your meditation evenings well; everyone should come.

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Edited Version

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